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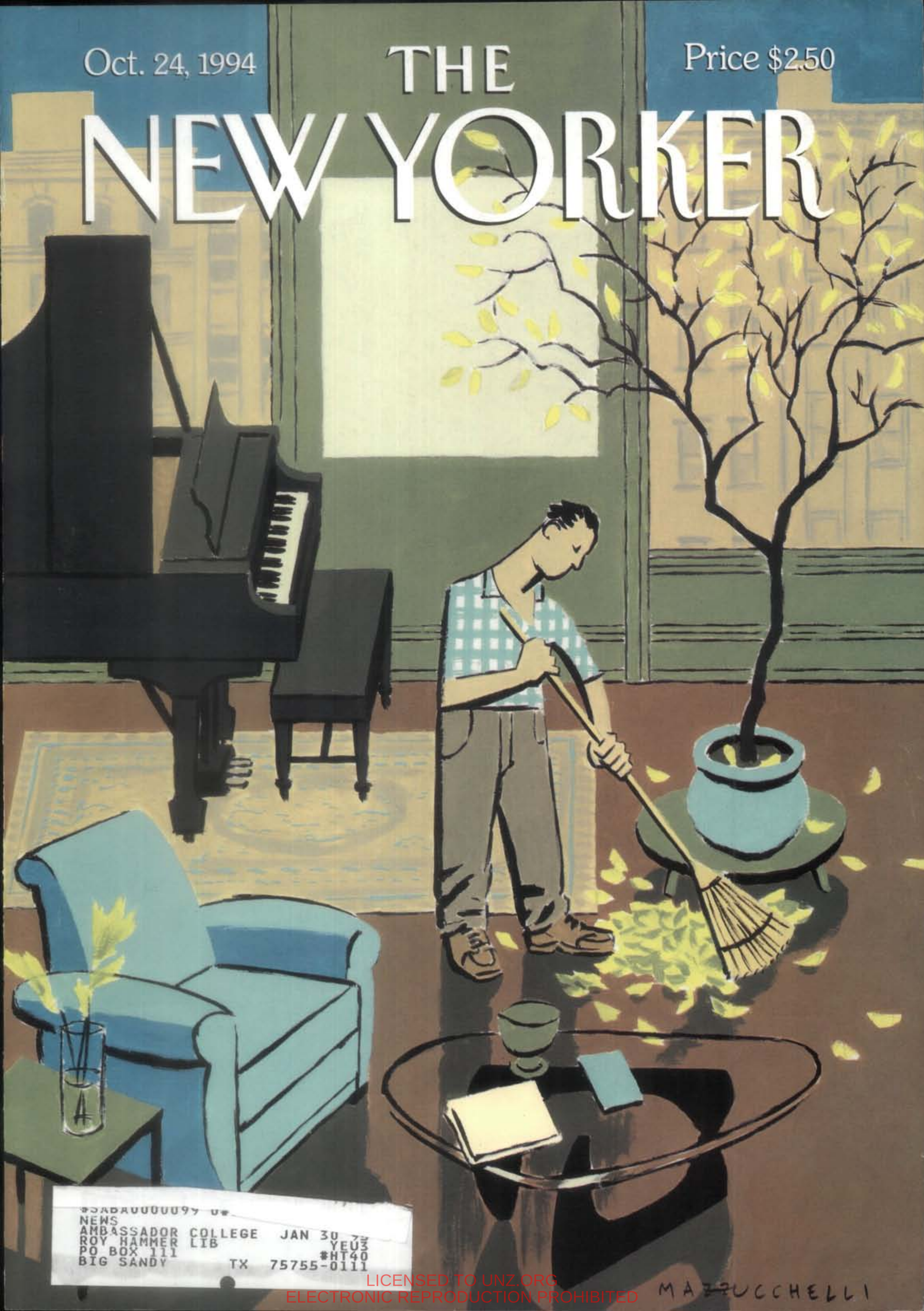

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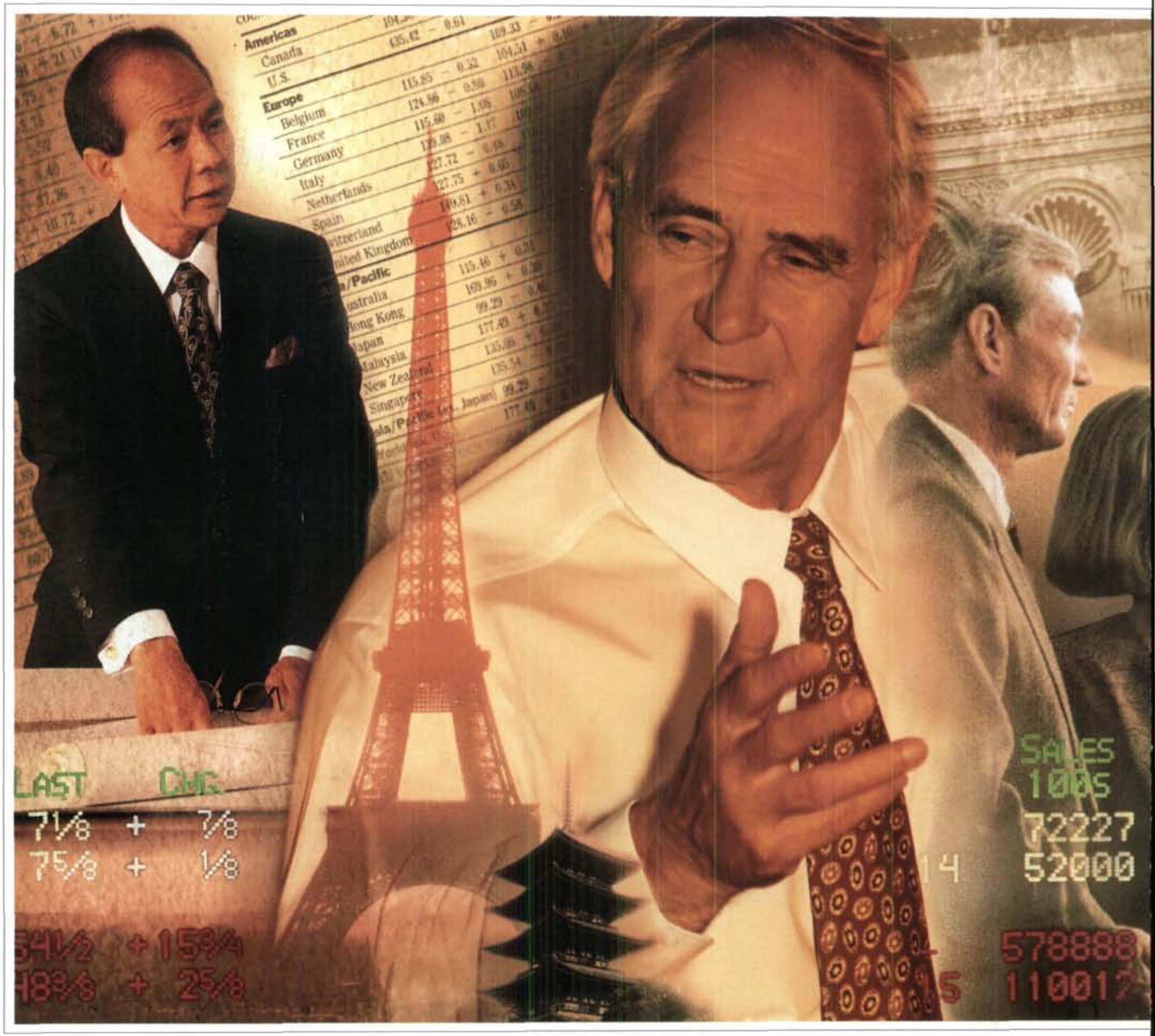
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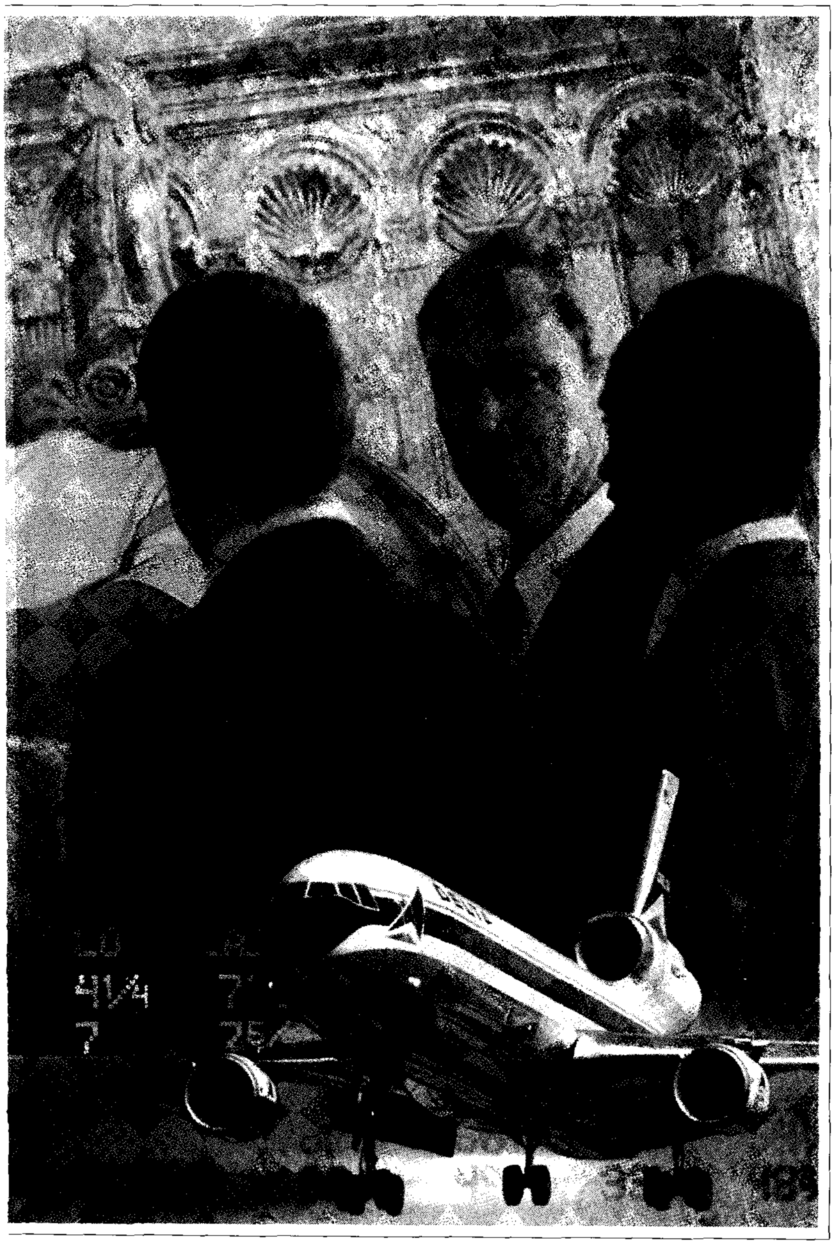

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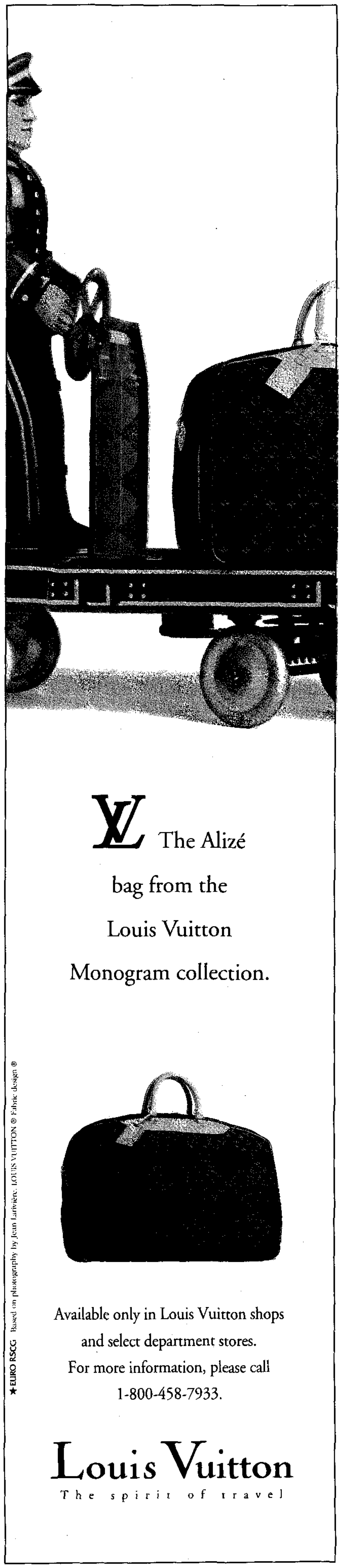
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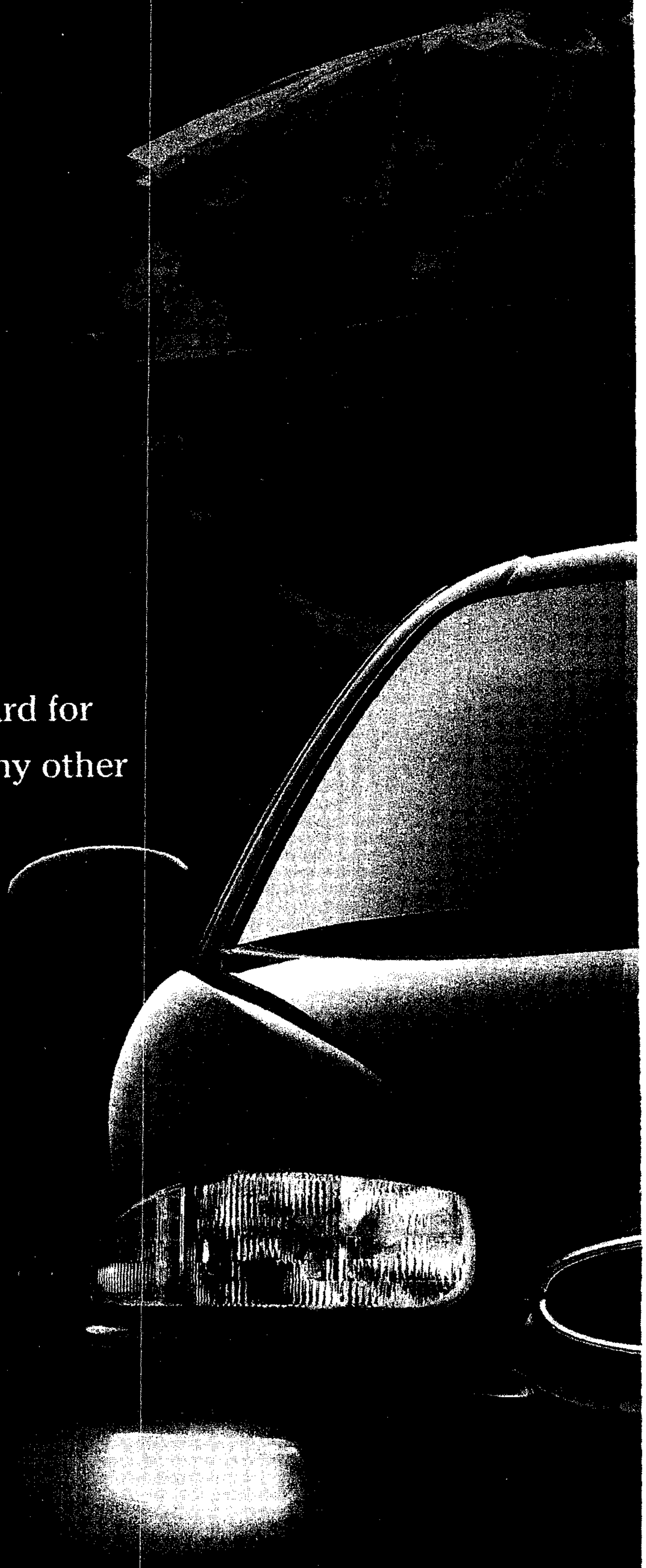

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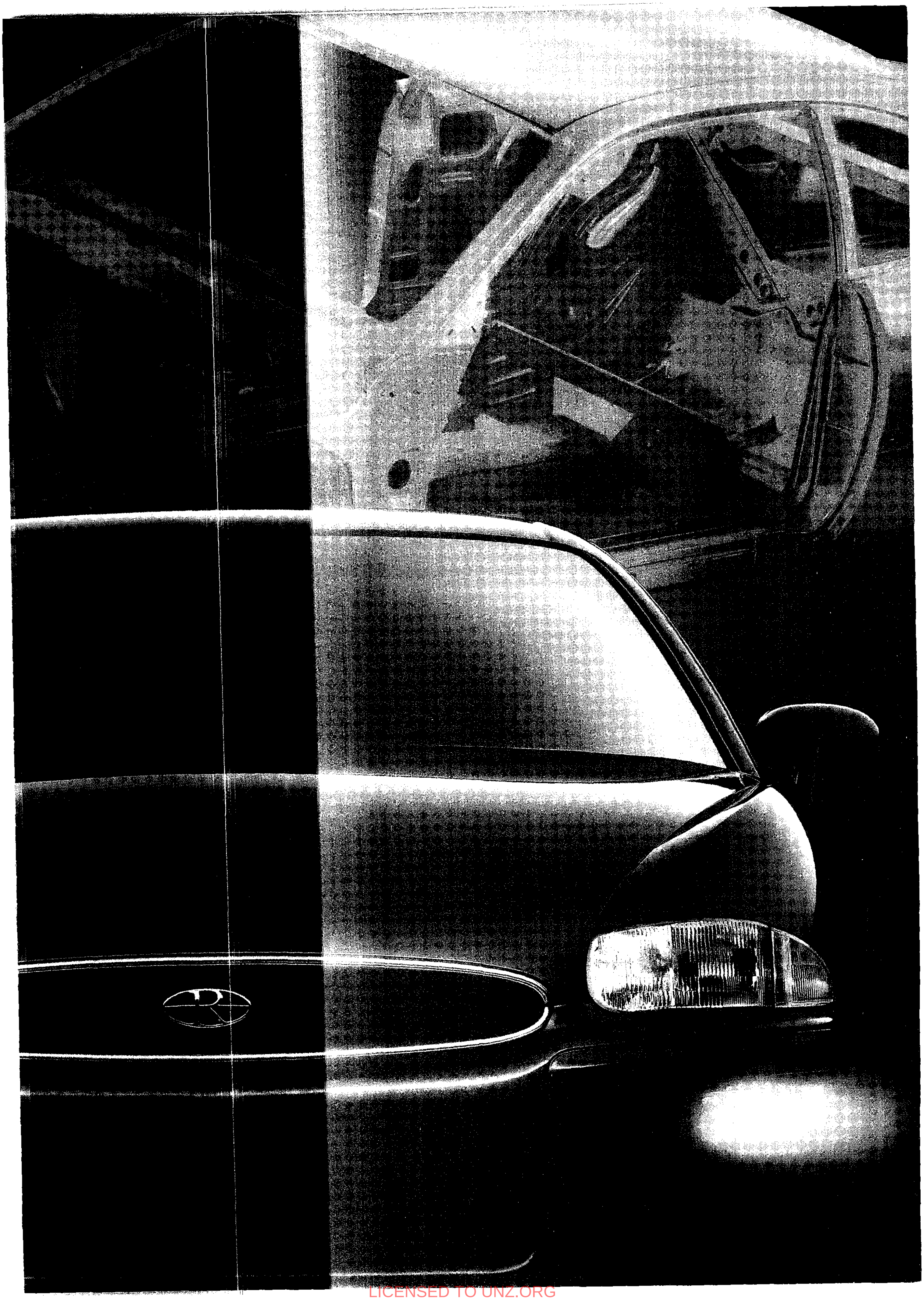

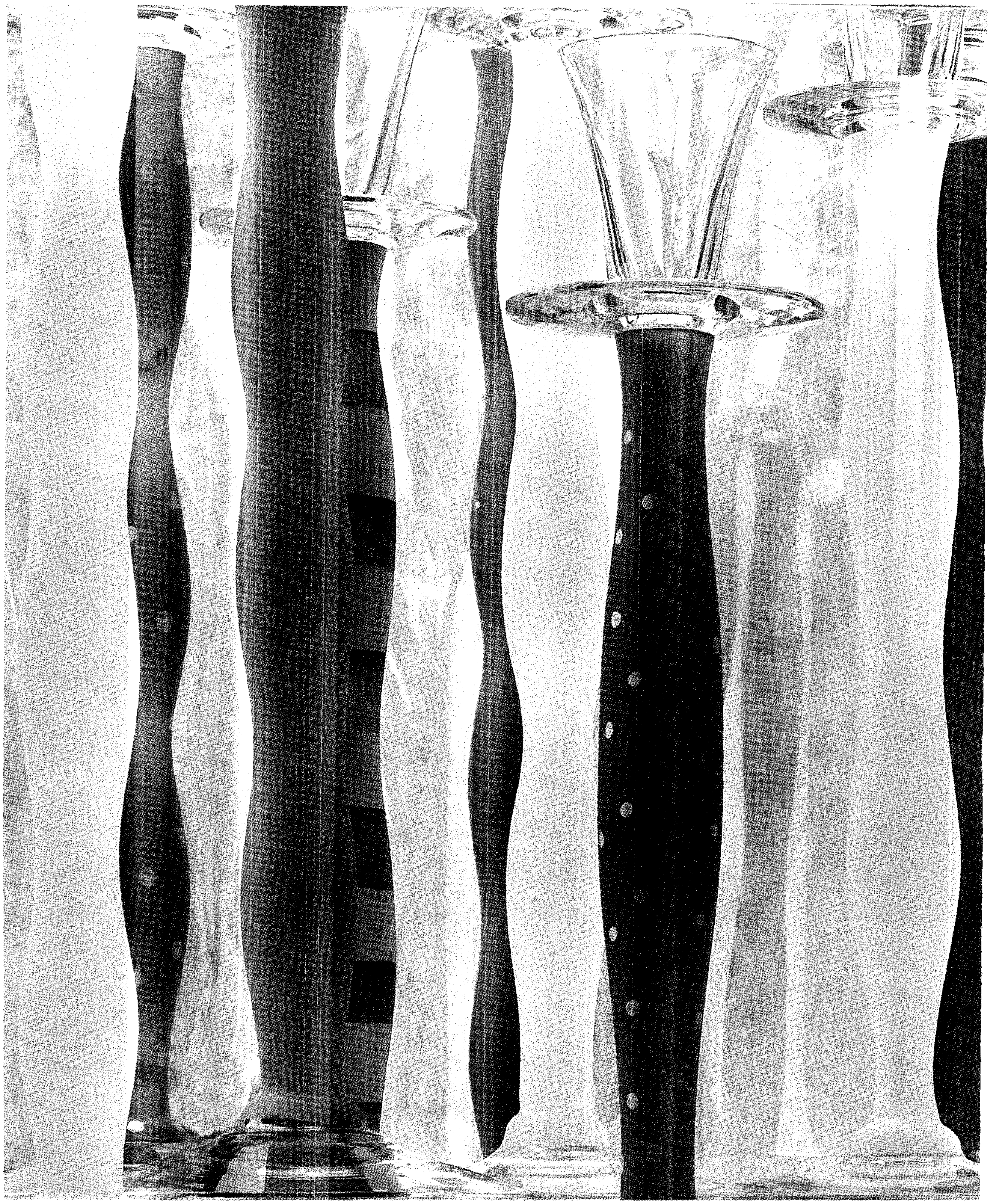

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COMMENT

THE BLACK LEADERSHIP MYTH

Needed: a politics that looks beyond racial unanimity.

Is there a leadership crisis in black America? So the headlines suggest. Ben Chavis is dismissed as the executive director of the N.A.A.C.P.; Mel Reynolds, who won a Chicago congressional seat in 1992 by defeating an odious incumbent, Gus Savage, is indicted for sexual misconduct; Mike Espy, who made history as Mississippi's first black member of Congress since Reconstruction, resigns under pressure as Secretary of Agriculture. Meanwhile, Marion Barry, the ex-mayor of Washington, after an interlude in prison as a drug felon, is coasting back into his old office, and rhetoricians of various stripes—Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan among them—are steadily increasing their followings. The mighty have fallen, the fallen become mighty.

Hence the hand-wringing. If only we could get the right leadership in place, some Americans, both black and white, have begun to think, then maybe we could get a handle on the grassroots problems. The trouble is, no one can agree on what that leadership should look like. Pollsters have long known that there is in black America a remarkable gap between the views of the leaders and those of the led. A 1985 survey found that most blacks favored the death penalty and prayer in public schools, while most black leaders opposed both; that most blacks opposed school busing, while most black leaders favored it; and that the percentage of blacks who favored banning abortions was three times that of black leaders who did. On many key social issues, it appears, blacks are more conservative than whites. This fall, twenty-five of the Republican nominees for Congress are black—many more than ever before—and opinion surveys suggest that it would be unwise to dismiss this phenomenon. Given the breach between black leadership and its putative constituency, we shouldn't be surprised at the motley company seeking to fill it.

In the early years of this century, black leadership was divided into two supposedly irreconcilable camps, "integrationists," led by W. E. B. Du Bois, a founder of the N.A.A.C.P., and "accomodationists," led by Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute. Du Bois called for a civil-rights agenda, to be secured by the political and legal transfor-

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THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. Thomas A. Florio, president; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, senior vice-president/managing editor; Pamela H. Older, vice-president/manufacturing director; Peter Armour, vice-president/circulation director; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president/special-projects director; Maurie Perl, vice-president/public relations director; Robert A. Silverstone, vice-president/business manager; Richard Levine, vice-president/human-resources director; Julie A. McGowan, advertising director; Cindy Schreibman, creative services director; Gretel Schneider, marketing director. Branch advertising offices: 111 East Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60601; 41 Osgood Place, San Francisco, Calif. 94133; 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1460, Los Angeles, Calif. 90036; MediaAmerica, Ltd., 10 Old Brewery Mews, London, England NW31PZ; Penn Brown & Associates, 20 Park Plaza, Suite 446, Boston, Mass. 02116; The Media Company: 3525 Piedmont Road, N.E., Building 5-Suite 440, Atlanta, Ga. 30305; MPR: 2500 So. Dixie Highway, Miami, Fla. 33133; 3016 Mason Place, Tampa, Fla. 33629; 3 Church St., Suite 503, Toronto, Canada M5E 1M2; 585 Ingrid Street, Laval, Quebec H7P 3P7; Carol Orr & Co., 3500 Maple Ave., Suite 1060, Dallas, Tx. 75219; Catherine Billups & Co., Via Pinamonte Da Vimercate, No. 6, 20121 Milan, Italy. Steve Leece Media Ltd., Shun Pont Commercial Building, 5-11 Thomson Road, #12-B, Wanchai, Hong Kong. SLDM Pte. Ltd., 7500-A Beach Road, #09-324 The Plaza, 0719 Singapore, Republic of Singapore. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: To inquire about a subscription or to change an address, please write to THE NEW YORKER, Box 56447, Boulder, Colorado 80322, or telephone 1 800 825-2510. For a change of address, subscribers should give four weeks notice. If possible, please send the address label from a recent issue. © 1994 by *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

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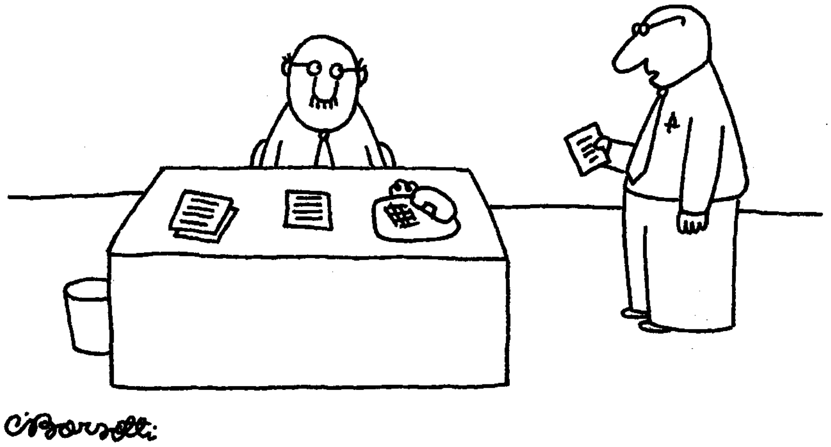
mation of American society; Washington championed a form of group uplift, to be secured by vocational education, with civil rights left for down the road. With the coming of the civil-rights era, and the partial fulfillment of Du Bois's agenda, the camp of accommodationists gave way to that of separatists: Marcus Garvey, of the back-to-Africa movement, and, later, Elijah Muhammad, of the Nation of Islam, squared off against civil-rights organizations like the N.A.A.C.P., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the National Urban League. However different in tone Farrakhan's and Booker T. Washington's rhetorics may be, they are cousins in content.

The underlying question is who counts as a black leader—and that, of course, depends on who's doing the counting. For decades now, *Ebony*—read by more black Americans than any other black-oriented magazine—has presented an annual list of "The 100 Most Influential Black Americans." As recently as 1971, *Ebony's* list included not only elected officials like Senator Edward Brooke and appointed ones like Justice Thurgood Marshall but also radical luminaries like Huey P. Newton and Angela Davis, poets like Amiri Baraka and Gwendolyn Brooks, athletes like John Mackey and Muhammad Ali, entertainers like Bill Cosby and Duke Ellington, scholars and writers like John Hope Franklin and Lerone Bennett, and businessmen like Berry Gordy and John H. Johnson, *Ebony's* own publisher. Then, there were the leaders of black fraternal and sorority groups, with their marvellous titles—the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks, the Grand Polemarch of Kappa Alpha Psi, the Supreme Basileus of Alpha Kappa Alpha. But, as the number of elected officials grew, so did the competition for spaces on the *Ebony* 100. Nearly forty per cent of this year's list is taken up with the names of members of Congress; adding Presidential appointees brings the total percentage to fifty-four. The list, in other words, is more like a black version of Washington's *Blue Book* than like the multifarious sampling of black opinion leaders that it once was. (Curiously, though, Vernon Jordan, arguably the most powerful black man in America, did not appear on it.) Last year, as a kind of set-aside for those crowded out by the Beltway types, *Ebony* added a list of "Organization Leaders" where the Grand Polemarch and the Supreme Basileus can make the cut.

Ben Chavis seemed to be counting differently when, earlier this year, he organized a controversial "leadership conference": few of the current *Ebony* 100 showed up at it. Plainly, Chavis's idea of leadership was informed by a fondness—or a nostalgia—for the intoxicating rhetoric of sixties black nationalism. He pointedly convened many of the aging remnants of a bygone era's nationalist vanguard, among them the poet Haki Madhubuti and the black-power theorist Maulana Ron Karenga, and, representing a somewhat younger generation, the academic politician Leonard Jeffries. Chavis, whose historical point of reference remains the Black Power era, thus sought to define the present along hoary assimilationist-separatist lines.

A theoretical politics of solidarity—of unity, of sacred covenants—must inevitably run up against the hard facts of political economy. Hovering over the national conversation on the subject of black leadership is an implicit vision of thirty-five million black Americans as a community of interests. But black America isn't merely *as* fissured as white America; it is more so. Precisely because of the success of the civil-rights movement, the black middle class has never been larger. It has quadrupled since 1967, and it doubled during the nineteen-eighties alone. Never before have so many blacks done so well. And never before have so many blacks done so poorly. Forty-six per cent of black children live in poverty. (The figure for white children is sixteen per cent.) The black underclass has never been larger. (Blacks make up twelve per cent of the nation's population but fifty per cent of the nation's prisoners.) With integration, black America has been disintegrating: the realities of race no longer affect all blacks in the same way.



"It's from the boss. We're to commit mass suicide."

Whether out of victims' rage or survivors' guilt, the differences are often cloaked in a romantic black nationalism, but the easy Manichaeanism of the nineteen-sixties is a distraction in the nineteen-nineties. Once, a politics could be buttressed by the idea of "blackness," an idea that was itself buttressed by an invidious system of social and legal racism; and, once, that politics could efface a multitude of human differences. But rhetoric has not kept pace with reality. Although the Voting Rights Act served, in some measure, to formalize the notion of racial representation, its consequences undermined its premise—that a transparency of interests existed between the representative and the represented. The class disparities within the "black community" are discussed only warily and awkwardly, because they undermine the very concept of such a community.

The real crisis in black leadership, then, is that the idea of black leadership is in crisis. On this score, we cannot turn for help to our vested élites—not even to our Grand Polemarch or Supreme Basileus. Black America needs a politics whose first mission is not the reinforcement of the idea of black America; it needs a discourse of race that is not centrally concerned with preserving the idea of race and racial unanimity. We need something we do not yet have: a way of speaking about black poverty that does not falsify the reality of black advancement; a way of speaking about black advancement that does not distort the enduring realities of black poverty. Much depends on whether we get it.

—HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

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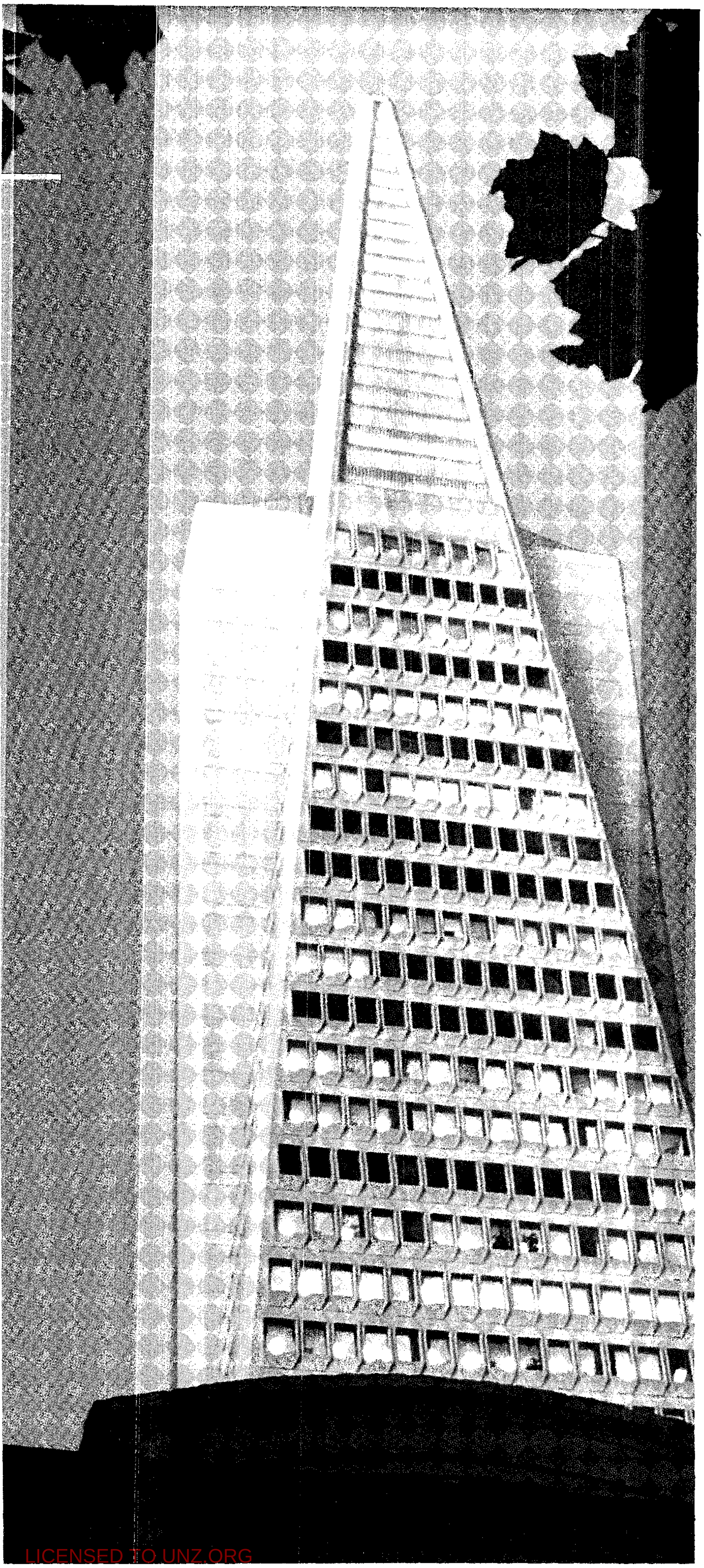

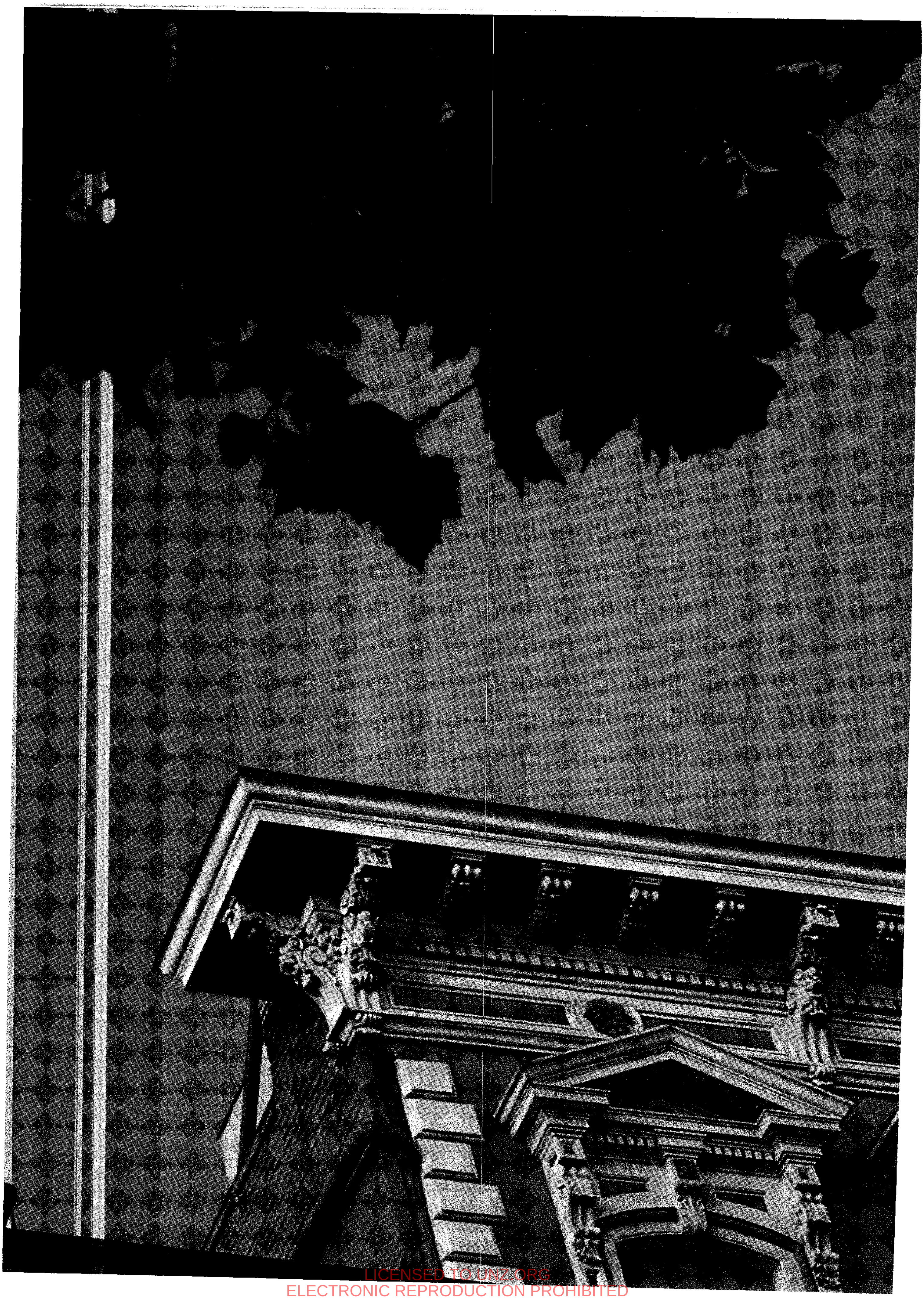

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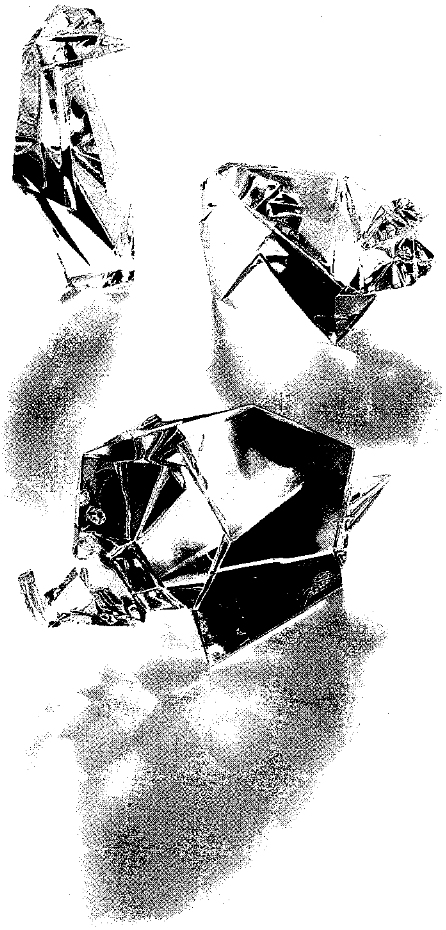

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CLASS ACTION

James Traub's account of a remedial-skills class at City College ("Class Struggle," September 19th) is often moving, but, unfortunately, it presents a one-dimensional portrait of how City College and the City University have responded to the crisis in the public schools. What the article overlooks is that there is much more to City College than remediation: Over the last ten years, the number of students taking remedial writing has dropped from twelve hundred and forty-three to two hundred and thirty-four. City College is one of the nation's leading sources of black and Hispanic engineers and doctors; it boasts one of the largest contingents of minority students working toward a Ph.D. in the sciences anywhere; eighty per cent of the first-time applicants from City College's premedical program are accepted by schools in the health professions; and City College's creative-writing program is one of the finest in the nation.

I firmly believe that every student who attends City College benefits in some important measure, even if he or she does not obtain a degree. To those who fail to understand why City College and CUNY offer educationally disadvantaged students a second chance to enter the regular academic program, I would put the questions: What are the alternatives? And what would the quality of life in New York City be today without CUNY?

YOLANDA T. MOSES
President
The City College of New York
New York City

Mr. Traub's article reminded me of my own struggles as the chairman of the City College English Department when, in 1970, the policy of open admissions was thrust upon CUNY by external political pressures, five years earlier than had been planned. By now, so many essays and books—my own "Academic Turmoil" included—have been written about open admissions that this educational phenomenon is like "Rashomon," a tragedy in which each participant offers his own version of the truth. My version? The tragedy of open admissions was that there was no careful academic plan with realistic expectations. In 1976, CUNY went temporarily bankrupt, and the political dream—built upon a very shaky academic foundation and imposed upon an unprepared faculty—was a nightmare. As Alice learned in Wonderland, if you don't know where you're going, any path will get you there.

THEODORE L. GROSS
Chicago, Ill.

"The class often seemed sunk in apathy," Mr. Traub says of students in Rudi Gedamke's College Skills course at City College. Traub, like his long-suffering subject, Gedamke, has plenty of damaging things to say about students in that class but seems unconscious of the shortcomings of their teacher. Gedamke harangues and moralizes, and is condescending toward his students for not responding to what sounds to me (a CUNY community-college teacher) like a profoundly dull repertoire of decontextualized tasks. I'd be apathetic in that class, too—when I wasn't enraged.

RUTH MISHELOFF
Borough of Manhattan Community College
New York City

CREATING TV

Ken Auletta, in his article "The $64,000 Question" (September 19th), concludes that television has succeeded in "numbing" the "sense of outrage" felt over the quiz-show scandals, since we now "expect, and tolerate, cheating" from television. Mr. Auletta's evidence of modern-day cheating includes every-

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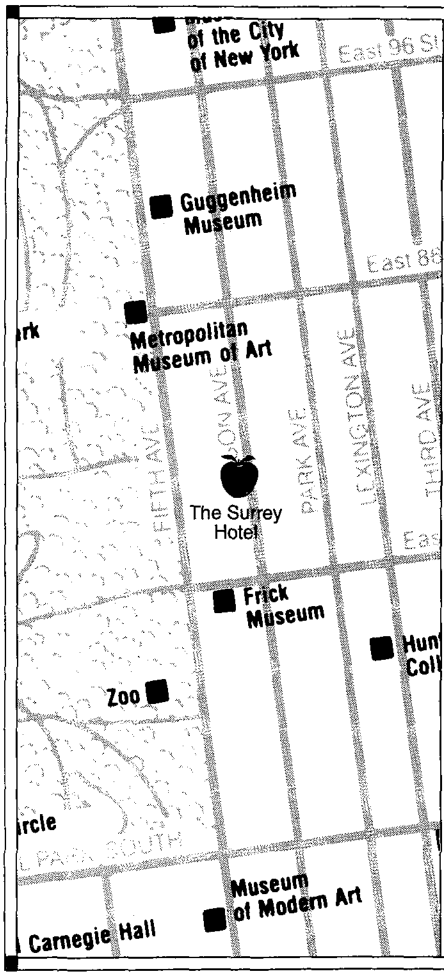

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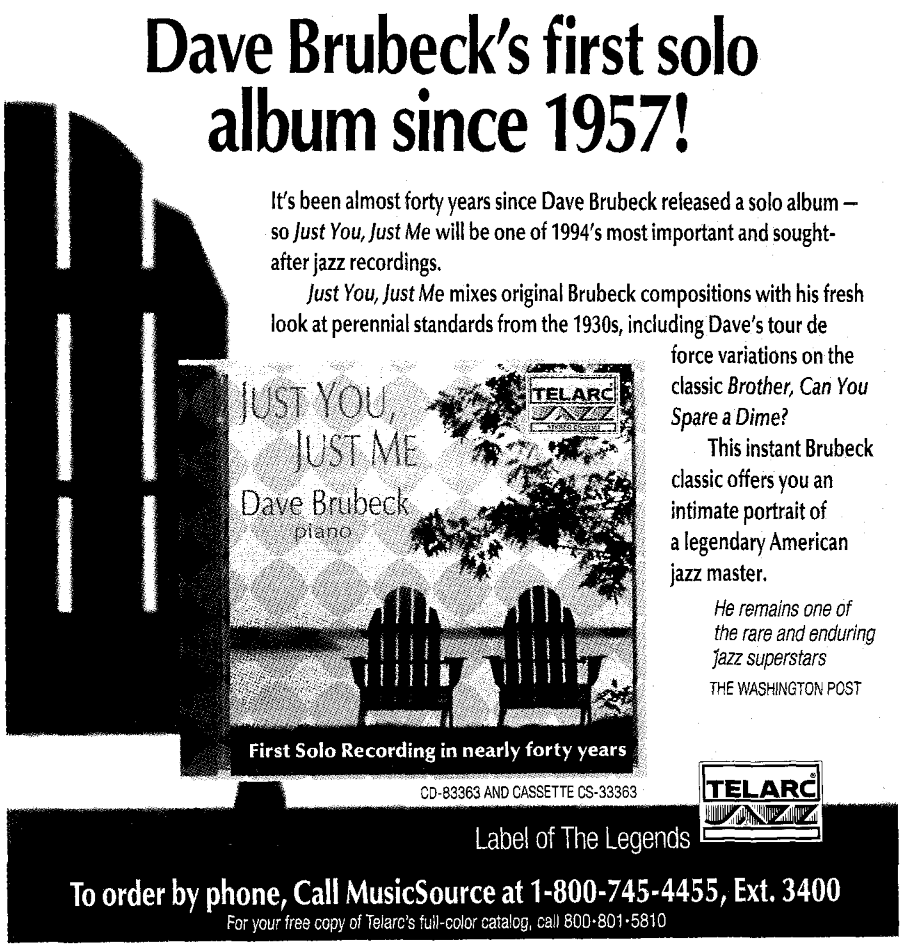

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thing from "60 Minutes" (entertainment values in news broadcasts) to "The McLaughlin Group" (compression for reasons of time and drama). But what about dramatic reënactments, compression, and other techniques in movies? What about "Quiz Show" itself, which invents scenes out of whole cloth and drastically alters events and facts in order to present a morality play?

One doesn't have to defend all the practices condemned by Mr. Auletta to feel that his criticism of television's "cheating" is too severe. All narrative necessarily involves selection and compression of story elements, characters, or situations, and presents them in a manner designed to inform, entertain, or inspire. When it's done with integrity, that process is not cheating. It is legitimate creativity at work.

GEORGE VRADENBURG
Fox Inc.
Beverly Hills, Calif.

As the producer of a couple of dozen audience-participation shows since I joined CBS, in 1941, I must leap to the defense of the Grande Dame of them all—"What's My Line?"—which I produced for its entire twenty-five-year run. Irwin Segelstein's statement, in Mr. Auletta's article, that the show was "organized and partly rehearsed" gives the impression that chicanery existed where it did not.

Just as any major-league baseball team takes batting and fielding practice before a game, our panel assembled onstage before the show and played a few practice games using stand-ins with invented occupations. It would have made no sense for us to help the panel solve the problem of the mystery guest's identity when the basic enjoyment of the program was derived from the panel's fumbling, witty, and sometimes hilarious attempts to arrive at the correct solution. In any case, the prize for a contestant who stumped the panel was fifty dollars, not sixty-four thousand dollars, and each mystery guest, no matter how important, got the standard five-hundred-dollar fee.

GIL FATES
Greenwich, Conn.

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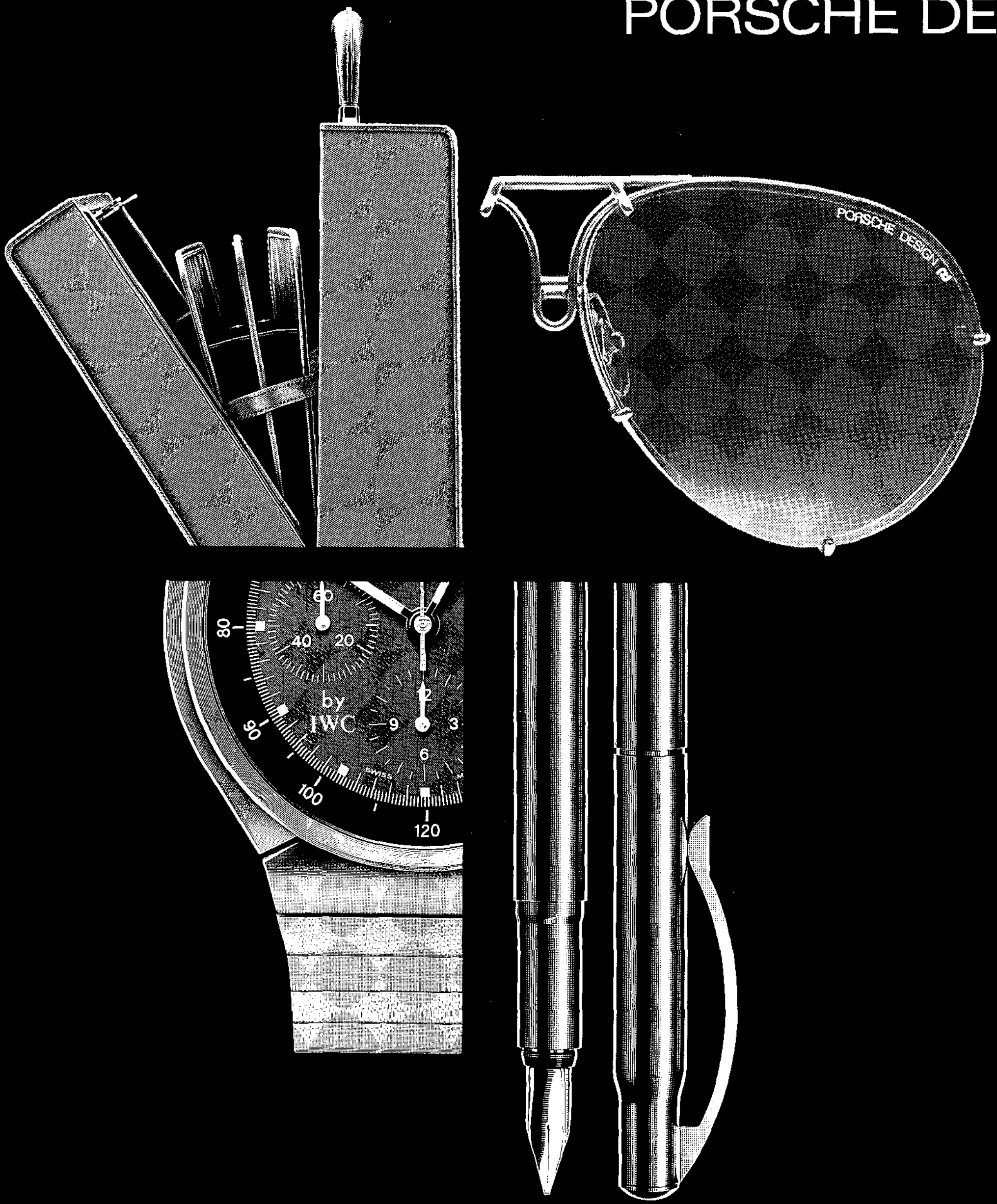

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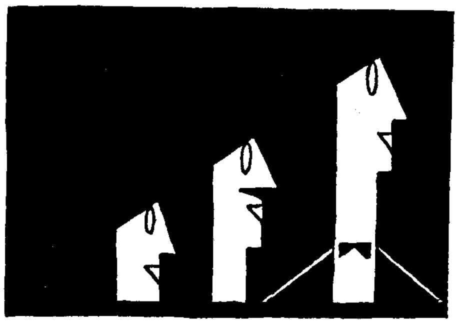

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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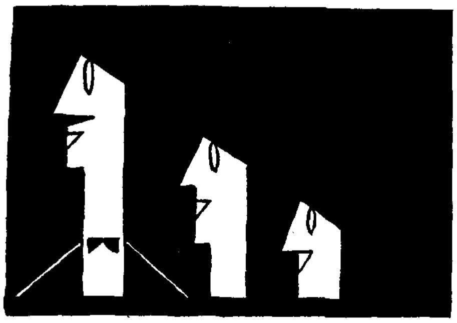


THE THEATRE

Hoch's Dozen

SINCE the performer Danny Hoch crashed the media spotlight last year with a one-man show called "Some People," he has had to shake off a number of weighty labels. "People have said my work is about racism, about prejudice, about multiculturalism," says the twenty-three-year-old Queens native. "But my work really is about language, about what happens to English when it passes through those for whom it's secondhand, through the kinds of people—Haitians, Indians, Poles—that I grew up around and that I hear on the streets every day." Since its première last year at P.S. 122, Hoch has revised "Some People," and the new version will open at the Public next week. With the assistance of his director, Jo Bonney, he has trimmed the evening's twelve portraits, and he'll rely as much on writing as on the structured improvisation that is his trademark. He has also added a thirteenth character. "She's an older woman," he says. "Her name is Doris, she's Jewish, and she's having an argument with her son on the phone. I'm basing her voice, sort of, on the voice of one of my relatives."

The Public engagement is bound to attract more of the Hollywood scouts who have been wooing Hoch for some time. That he has resisted their blandishments so far shows an almost retrograde degree of loyalty. Great performers may no longer be nurtured on Broadway, as *they were in the days of* Ethel Merman (whose "Gypsy" showstopper is invoked, indirectly, by Hoch's title), but as long as they keep popping up in dim, bleachered houses, there will be further cause for his genuine, slightly cockeyed faith in the theatre.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Blade to the Heat—Oliver Mayer's play about three Latino boxers, set in the fifties. George C. Wolfe is the director. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

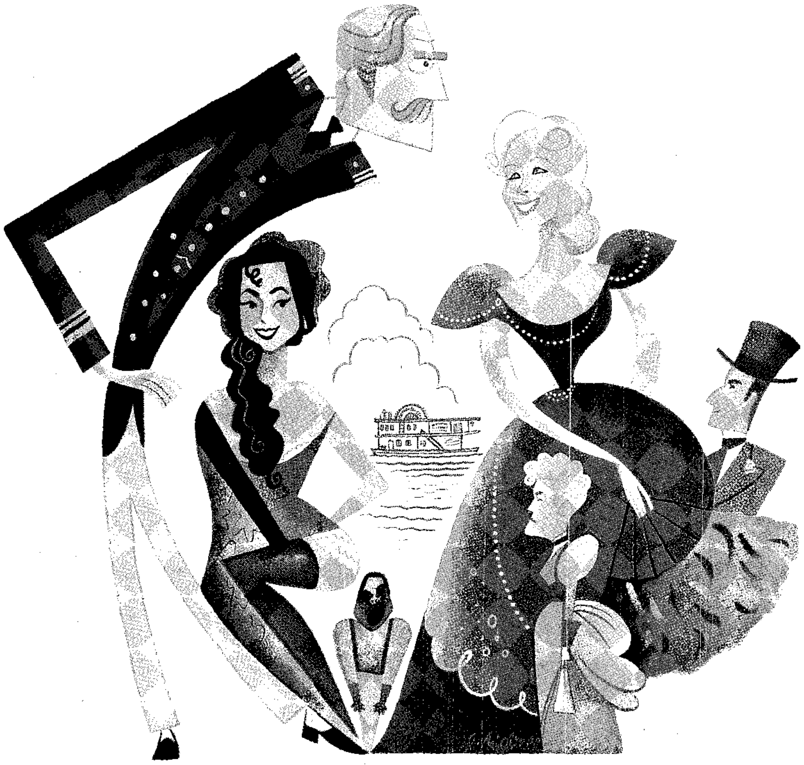
The Cover of Life—A play by R. T. Robinson about three war brides living in Louisiana in 1943. Peter Masterson directed. Previews through Oct. 22. Opens Oct. 23 at 6:45. (American Place Theatre, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Doctor Faustus—The Independent Theatre Company's production of Marlowe's play. Opens Oct. 19 at 8 and runs through Nov. 26. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—A new play by Terrence McNally, directed by Joe Mantello. With Randy Becker, Stephen Bogardus, John Glover, John Benjamin Hickey, Justin Kirk, Nathan Lane, and Stephen Spinella. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Public Enemy—The New York première of a 1987 play by Kenneth Branagh, which is set in Belfast. In previews. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

The Scarlet Letter—Phyllis Nagy's adaptation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic novel. Opens Oct. 19 at 7. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)



John McMartin, Lonette McKee, and Rebecca Luker in "Show Boat."

Some People—Danny Hoch's one-man show, which ran last year at P.S. 122. Previews through Oct. 22. Opens Oct. 23 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Uncommon Women and Others—Second Stage's revival of Wendy Wasserstein's 1977 play, directed by Carole Rothman. With Joan Buddenhagen, Julie Dretzin, Danielle Ferland, Jessica Lundy, Mary McCann, Haviland Morris, Robin Morse, Rosemary Murphy, and Stephanie Roth. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Very Warm for May—A concert version of the 1939 Kern and Hammerstein musical, with Brent Barrett, Donna Lynne Champlin, Elizabeth Futral, Gregory Jbara, and Jeanne Lehman. The brief engagement opens Oct. 19 at 7:30 and runs through Oct. 23. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

You Should Be So Lucky—Charles Busch has his first non-drag role in this comedy, which he also wrote. He's joined in the cast by Nell Campbell, Julie Halston, and Stephen Pearlman. Kenneth Elliott is the director. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-7471.)

OPENED RECENTLY

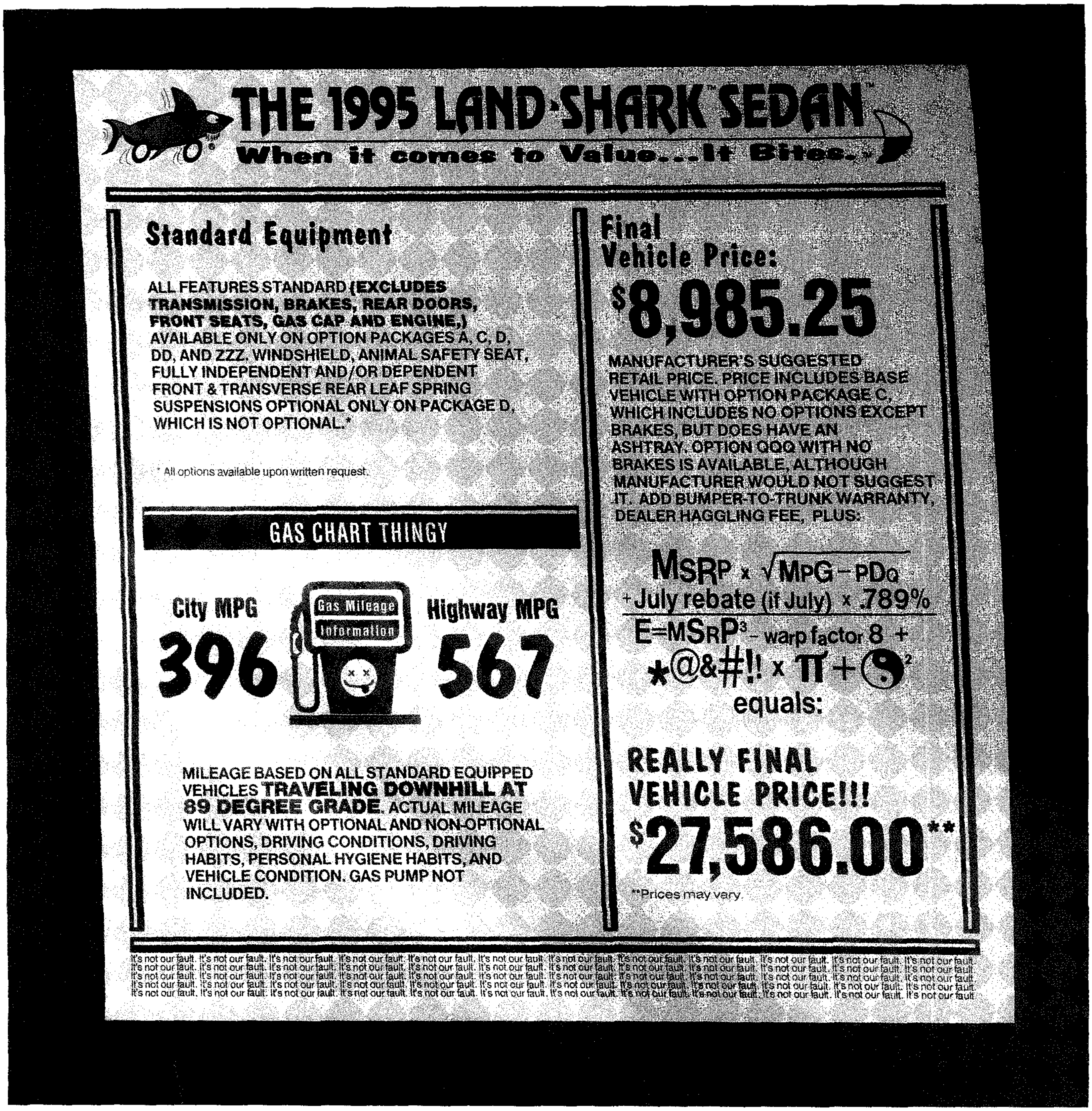
All in the Timing—Six sparkling short plays by David Ives add up to one enchanted evening. Ives and the deft director, Jason McConnell Buzas, are wonderfully served by their actors. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Arthur & Leila—A play by Cherylene Lee about a middle-aged brother and sister who don't agree on very much. Ron Nakahara directed. Presented by the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes Oct. 22.)

Beauty and the Beast—Disney's Broadway moneyspinner, adapted from the animated-film version, has a few moments of solid-gold theatrical amazement: the showstopping "Be Our Guest" production number and the Beast's transformation into the Prince. Directed by Robert Jess Roth. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/2/94.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100.)

Carousel—Nicholas Hytner's authoritative direction combines with Bob Crowley's inspired sets to transplant the National Theatre's 1993 *smash hit onto the Vivian* Beaumont stage. Bold, beautiful, and controversial, this multicultural reinterpretation launches Rodgers and Hammerstein toward the twenty-first century. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

A Cheever Evening—A. R. Gurney's new play, based on eighteen stories by John Cheever, is Cheeveresque in name only, a skin-deep,



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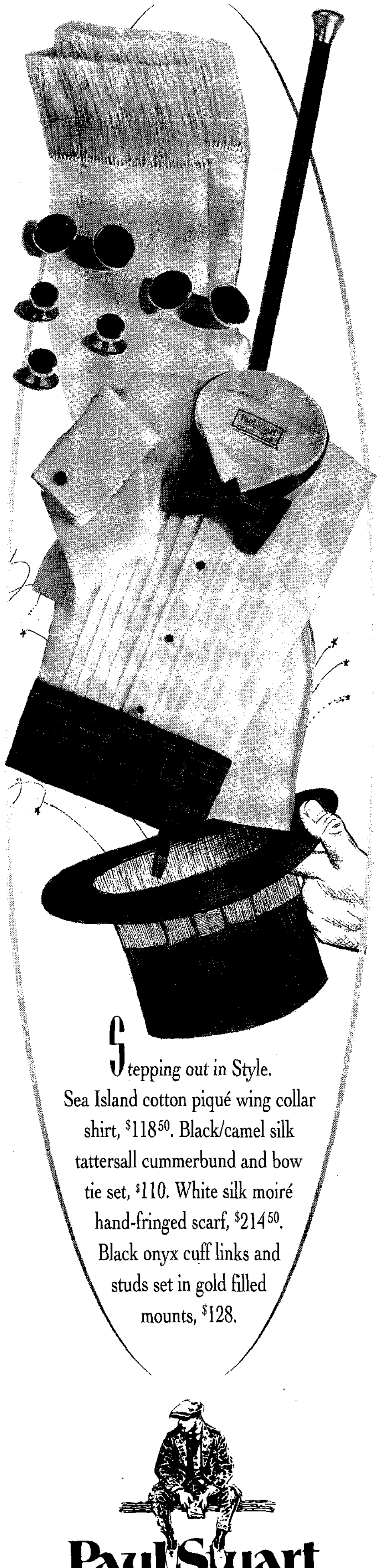
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almost sitcom-like gloss on the writer's piercingly beautiful and intensely disquieting work. The only authentic thing about the evening is the talent of the six delicious actors in the cast—John Cunningham, Mary Beth Peil, Jack Gilpin, Julie Hagerty, Robert Stanton, and Jennifer Van Dyck. Directed by Don Scardino. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

DAMN YANKEES—The big musical hit of 1955 is back, in its first Broadway revival. George Abbott and Douglass Wallop's book has been jarringly updated by the director, Jack O'Brien (with the help of the hundred-and-six-year-old Mr. Abbott). But the cast, which includes Victor Garber, delivers Richard Adler and Jerry Ross's music with sporty energy, and Rob Marshall has created some lively dance numbers. (4/4/94) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

DOWN BY THE OCEAN—P. J. Barry directs the York Theatre Company's production of his charming and punchy new comedy—the latest in his cycle of plays set in the fictional town of Jericho, Rhode Island—about four vacationing brothers-in-law who are bewitched and exasperated by the beautiful young woman next door. With Melina Kanakaredes and Sam Groom. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes Oct. 23.)

FAITH JOURNEY—A gospel musical, set in the South during the civil-rights movement. Book and lyrics by Clarence Cuthbertson and George Broderick, who also wrote the music. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

FIRST NIGHT—Lannyl Stephens and Daniel McDonald in a romantic comedy by Jack Neary. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

GREASE!—The talented cast and the inventive production team show off the gleeful phonyness of Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey's musical with unembarrassed affection, and the result is a fun fake that's not trying to pass as the real thing. Billy Porter blows the lid off the joint with his Little Richard-like rendition of "Beauty School Dropout." Jeff Calhoun directed and choreographed. (5/30/94) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

HYSTERICAL BLINDNESS AND OTHER SOUTHERN TRAGEDIES THAT HAVE PLAGUED MY LIFE THUS FAR—An autobiographical musical-comedy revue written by Leslie Jordan and starring Mark Baker. It's a tale of growing up Tennessean, thespian, and gay. Joe Patrick Ward's energetic musical numbers run the gamut from corn to gospel. (Playhouse on Vandam, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555.)

AN INSPECTOR CALLS—J. B. Priestley's 1945 mystery is not really a play—it's a speech, about every man's link to every other man. The fine cast, which includes Kenneth Cranham, Philip Bosco, and Jane Adams, has ideas, not actions, to play. Directed by Stephen Daldry. (5/16/94) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JACKIE MASON: POLITICALLY INCORRECT—A former rabbi from a family of rabbis, Mason uses the stage as his bully pulpit. Behind his shtick, which is sometimes vulgar but always funny, is a fundamentalist disgust at the world's fraud, wickedness, hypocrisy, and inhumanity. (4/25/94) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JEAN COCTEAU REPERTORY—Presenting two shows in rotating repertory: "The Keepers," a drama by Barbara Lebow, set in Maine in the eighteen-fifties, and a modern-dress production of William Wycherley's seventeenth-century comedy "The Country Wife," directed by Tori Haring-Smith. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

JELLY ROLL!—Vernel Bagneris stars in a musical show about Jelly Roll Morton. With Morten Gunnar Larsen on piano. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

KING LEAR—The Pearl Theatre Company's first production in its bigger, better new home is this intelligent and lucid "Lear." The great foolishness is there, and the grief, but the light shed on the play is always temperate, never agonizing. Even as you're engaged by the fine cast, you may yearn for more intensity. With Robert Hock as Lear and Rachel Botchan as Cordelia. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Mark's Pl. 598-9802. Closes Oct. 22.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM—Put the Ridiculous Theatrical Company and Shakespeare's comedy together and you get ridiculousness of a very high order indeed. Under the direction of Everett Quinton (who plays Bottom and Pyramus—here pronounced like the New Jersey town of the different spelling), the large cast, featuring many veteran Ridiculi and a few newcomers, puts on a well-paced and spirited performance. The delightful, good-taste-be-damned costumes are by Ramona Ponce. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, 1 Sheridan Sq. 691-2271.)

A MODEST PROPOSAL—A comedy by the French playwright Tilly, in a translation by Richard Miller. (Ubu Repertory Theatre, 15 W. 28th St. 679-7562. Closes Oct. 23.)

PASSION—Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's listless epistolary musical, in which the main characters spend much of their time singing love letters to and from each other. Jere Shea and Marin Mazzie are in fine voice as a dashing soldier and his lover, and Donna Murphy gives a stunning performance as Fosca, the predatory heroine. Lapine, who wrote the libretto, directed. (5/23/94) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

PHILADELPHIA, HERE I COME!—The Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Brian Friel's 1966 play, with Pauline Flanagan, Robert Stattel, Jay Snyder, and Jim True. Joe Dowling directed. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Oct. 22.)

THE SECRETARIES—A comedy, set in the office of an Oregon lumber mill, written and performed by the Five Lesbian Brothers (Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy, Dominique Dibbell, Peg Healey, and Lisa Kron). The play is a sustained, amusing look at the fine line between aggression and assertiveness. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989. Closes Oct. 22.)

SHOW BOAT—Harold Prince's bighearted production of the 1927 Jerome Kern–Oscar Hammerstein II musical is epic-size, full of life and full of vision. (The set features an amazingly real-looking show boat, designed by Eugene Lee.) And then there's that score, which sweeps through four decades of popular music, from operetta to ragtime to vaudeville—and includes the great existentialist anthem "Ol' Man River," here sung by Michel Bell. With John McMartin and Elaine Stritch as the patriarch and the matriarch of the floating theatre, and Lonette McKee, whose moving rendition of "Bill" is the show's most intimate moment. Also with Rebecca Luker, Mark Jacoby, Gretha Boston, Dorothy Stanley, and Joel Blum. (10/17/94.) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

STOMP—A group of eight British rhythm specialists who use unconventional percussion instruments. The noise is terrific. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

TALKING PICTURES—The playwright Horton Foote applies his precise, sure touch to this drama about a household and its boarders, in a small South Texas town at the dawn of the Depression. Directed by Carol Goodheart, "Talking Pictures" is blessed with a first-rate cast, including Hallie Foote, the playwright's daughter, in a notable performance. (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 23.)

That's Life!—A seriocomic revue about the variety of Jewish life in America. Thirteen composers and lyricists collaborated on the twenty musical numbers. The choreography and direction are by Helen Butleroff. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Three Tall Women—A moving, poetic play by Edward Albee, which is dominated by the huge, heroic performance of Myra Carter. Jordan Baker and the droll and delightful Marian Seldes are also in the cast. (5/16/94) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Unexpected Tenderness—A play by Israel Horovitz, with Scotty Bloch, Caitlin Clarke, Sol Frieder, Karen Goberman, Paul O'Brien, Steve Ryan, and Jonathan Marc Sherman. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Young Playwrights Festival—On the bill: "The Basement at the Bottom at the End of the World," by Nadine Graham; "The Most Massive Woman Wins," by Madeleine George; and "The Love of Bullets," by Jerome D. Hairston. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Oct. 29.)

LONG RUNS

ANGELS IN AMERICA: "Millennium Approaches" and "Perestroika." (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.) . . . **BLOOD BROTHERS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **FAMILY SECRETS:** Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WHO'S TOMMY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Angels on Ice—A benefit for Gay Men's Health Crisis, with performances by the ice skaters Gary Beacom, Philippe Candeloro, Alexei Urmanov, Elaine Zayak, Calla Urbanski & Rocky Marval, Maia Usova & Alexander Zhulin, and many others. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Oct. 24 at 7.)

DANCE

Paul Taylor Dance Company—Final performances of the engagement. Oct. 19 at 8: "Esplanade," "A Field of Grass," "Moonbine," and "Syzygy." . . . ¶ Oct. 20 and Oct. 22 at 8, and Oct. 23 at 7:30: "Aureole," "A Field of Grass," "Funny Papers," and "Sunset." . . . ¶ Oct. 21 at 8 and Oct. 22 at 2: "Spindrift," "Big Bertha," "A Field of Grass," and "Syzygy." . . . ¶ Oct. 23 at 3: "Minikin Fair," "Spindrift," and "Moonbine." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago—In its first Manhattan engagement, the company presents works by James Kudelka and Twyla Tharp, among others. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 19-21 and Oct. 25 at 8; Oct. 22 at 2 and 8; and Oct. 23 at 2. Through Oct. 30.)

Nederlands Dans Theater 1—At the Next Wave Festival. Oct. 19 at 8: "Kaguyahime." . . . ¶ Oct. 20-22 at 8: Five works, including the American première of "Whereabouts Unknown." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100.)

Nederlands Dans Theater 2—The younger edition (with dancers aged seventeen to twenty-one) of the company. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 1-718 636-4100. Oct. 24-25 and Oct. 27 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Stepping Eastward

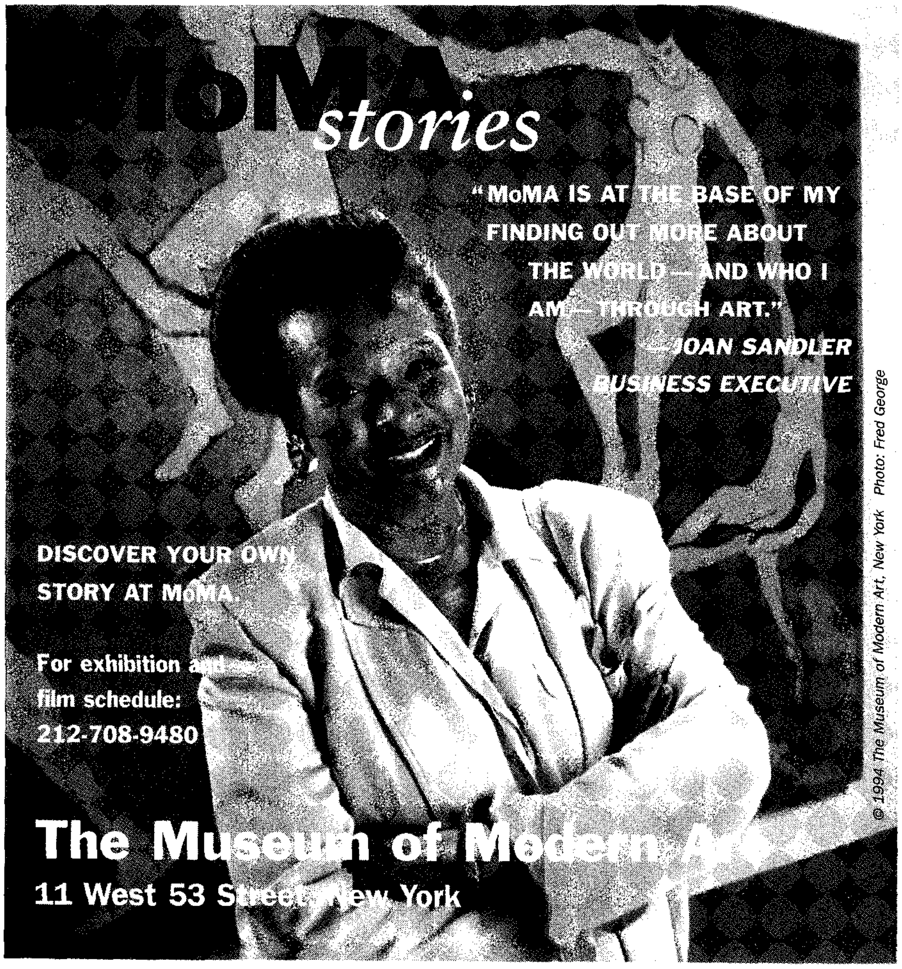
To describe twenty-seven-year-old Jeff Buckley as a singer-songwriter from California and the son of a legendary folk-rock star is to reveal virtually nothing about him. He was never close to his father, Tim Buckley (who died in 1975), and even though he grew up near Los Angeles, he considered New York his spiritual home long before he moved to the Lower East Side, in 1990. "I always felt misplaced on the West Coast," Buckley said recently. "I've always walked faster, talked faster, and fallen in and out of love faster than most people in Los Angeles." He's keen about the down-to-earth egalitarianism of downtown street life: "Iggy's around Tompkins Square Park, Philip Glass is just down the way, Lou Reed's poking around in the garbage—they work here. They're not just riding around in their big cars. In California, things are more spread out. Here, there's more contact between people, and more truth."

Buckley's music also has complicated origins. Clearly, blues, soul, and classic rock were big influences. His sense of melodrama brings a touch of cabaret to his singing, as when his piercing tenor goes from an impassioned wail to a tender falsetto purr. His talent and energy—as well as his depths of feeling—were apparent on "Live at Sin-é," a 1993 EP recorded at Café Sin-é, one of his downtown haunts. His first album, "Grace," is destined to appear on a lot of "Best of 1994" lists, and he has begun to play in larger venues; not long ago, he opened for Soundgarden. Buckley's next local appearance, on October 22 at St. Ann's, will be a homecoming of sorts: it was the site of his first big New York gig—a 1991 tribute to his father.

CONCERTS

The Pretenders—Before there was Courtney or Liz, there was Chrissie Hynde, front woman for the Pretenders and iconoclastic female rocker par excellence. Earlier this year, Hynde and her band came back with a vengeance, releasing their first album in four years and their best in a decade. "Last of the Independents" combines raw vigor and pop mastery with a radiant maturity and a hard-won sense of authority. If you missed the Pretenders' exhilarating club gigs this spring, you can't pass on this show; if you did catch them, you probably won't want to. With Material Issue. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Oct. 23 at 8.)

Shawn Colvin—On her new album, "Cover Girl," Colvin offers wistful renditions of some of her favorite tunes by other songwriters, ranging from Tom Waits' "(Looking for) The Heart of Saturday Night" to the Police's "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" (though Colvin uses the masculine pronoun). There are no revela-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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

tions, but it's always a joy to hear Colvin's milk-and-honey soprano; live it's even more expressive. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 24 at 8.)

Ben Harper / Ted Hawkins—Singer-songwriter Harper has been getting good notices for his début album, "Welcome to the Cruel World." Texturally speaking, his music is lean folk-rock, but the haunted soulfulness of his delivery made him fit right in on tour with Gil Scott-Heron recently. Hawkins busked on California beaches for years before his first major-label effort, "The Next Hundred Years," was released this past spring. But the début of this folk-blues singer, now fifty-eight, was worth waiting for, thanks to his intensely supple guitar work and his remarkable voice, which evokes the ghost of Otis Redding. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. Oct. 21 at 8.)

Cabaret Convention—More than a hundred and twenty-five cabaret stars perform in this edition of the annual series, sponsored by the Mabel Mercer Foundation. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. Oct. 19-22 at 6 and Oct. 23 at 3. For information about tickets, call 980-3026.)

The Grateful Dead—Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Oct. 19 at 7:30.

Futu Futu—Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway. 966-4444. Oct. 19 at 8.

Juan Martín—In a program of flamenco guitar music. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Oct. 19 at 8.)

Suzy Bogguss and Chet Atkins—Carnegie Hall. Oct. 21 at 8.

Deee-Lite—Manhattan Center Ballroom, 311 W. 34th St. 307-7171. Oct. 21 at 8.

"Heavenly Jazz"—Presenting John Bunch, Bob Haggart, Bob Kindred, and Dennis Mackrel. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Oct. 23 at 6. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Han Tang Yuehfu—A Taiwan-based group in a program of ancient Chinese music. (Taipei Theatre, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 48th St. 373-1850. Oct. 21-22 at 7:30.)

Grover Washington, Jr.—With Chuck Mangione. (Beacon Theatre. Oct. 22 at 8.)

Jeff Buckley—Opening for the hot young singer-songwriter is Last Forever, a brainy New York folk quartet featuring a female singer, a violinist, a spinet player, and a fourth member on dulcimer and harmonium. (St. Ann's Church. Oct. 22 at 8.)

"La Combinación Perfecta"—Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Oscar D'Leon, Tony Vega, and Marc Anthony. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Oct. 22 at 8.)

Shashmaqam—A New York-based ensemble playing Bukharan Jewish music. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Oct. 22 at 8.)

Brooklyn Ethnic Music and Dance Festival—Performers include the De Franco Family, the Great Day Chorale (a gospel group), the All-Star Salsa/Son Group, and the Orian Band (a soca outfit). (Prospect Park, near the carrousel. Use the Willink entrance, at Empire Blvd. Oct. 23, from noon to 8. No tickets necessary.)

Tammy Wynette—Town Hall. 840-2824. Oct. 25 at 8.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Singer **weslia whitfield** is currently at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. A West Coast sensation, Whitfield will offer show tunes and standards. Whitfield will have on hand bassist Michael Moore, the best friend a singer could ask for. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, weekends to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—**lionel hampton & the golden men of jazz** play through Oct. 23. Beginning Oct. 25: guitarist **larry carlton.** Dining.

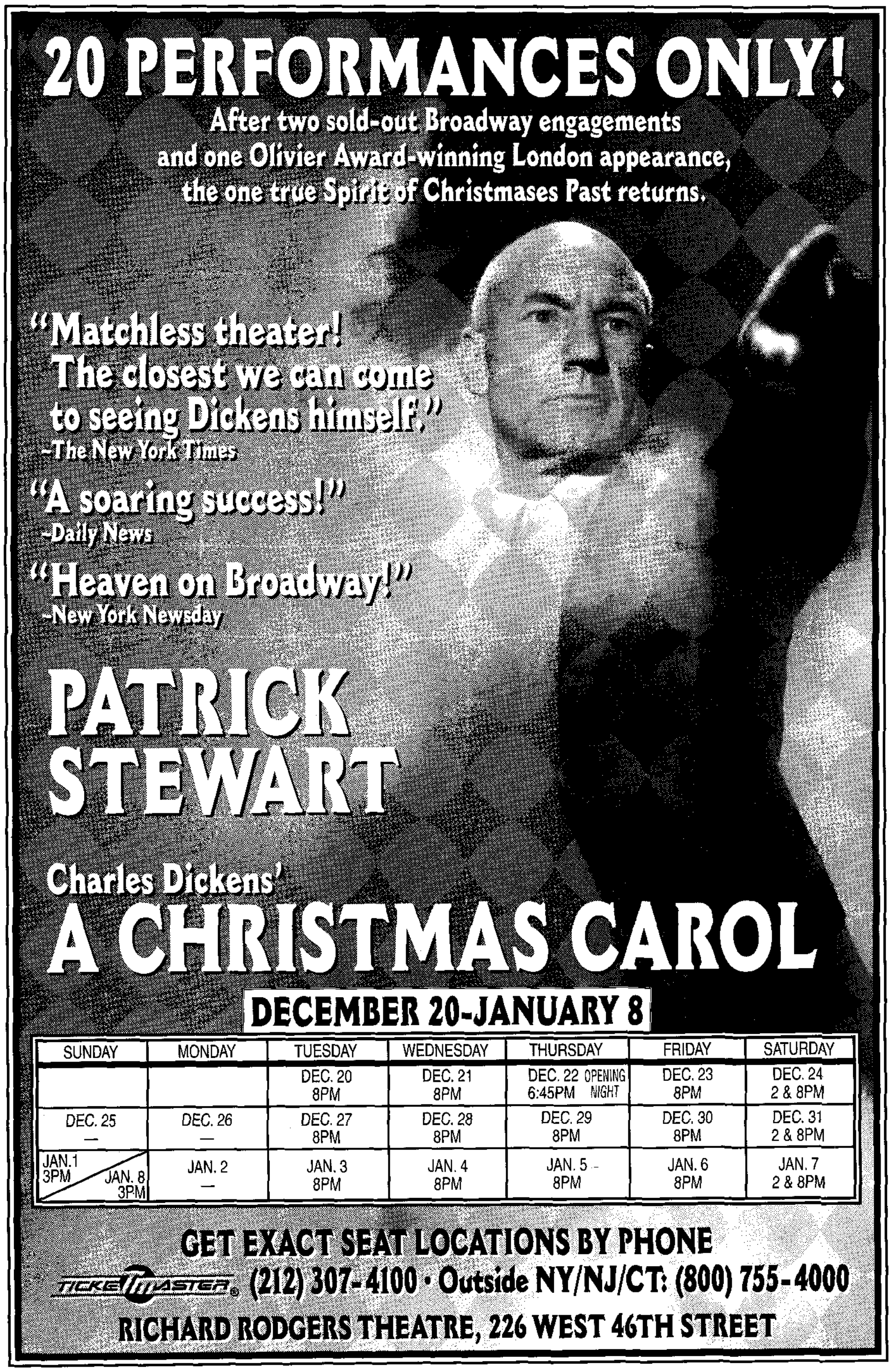
Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Oct. 23: catch the **idris muhammad** trio. Muhammad swings, hard. When this live-wire drummer gets moving behind a band, the effect is like a string of firecrackers exploding on the beat. He'll have help from pianist **john hicks** and bassist **santi debriano.** Starting Oct. 24: **leon parker, steve wilson, bruce barth,** and **larry grenadier.**

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and the fabulous **bobby short,** who returns on Oct. 21. Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of Short's ivory-tickling, nor has it deflated his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. Now in his twenty-seventh year at the Carlyle, Short continues to give the royal treatment to gems by Gershwin, Ellington, Arlen, Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening, and a quintessentially New York experience. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **barbara carroll** presides at the piano. Carroll's timing is infallible, and she is equally at ease with legato, backpedalling figures and double-time sprints. Her repertoire includes a long, wonderful "Porgy and Bess" stew, a funny "Sweet Georgia Brown," and a lilting, secret "Here's That Rainy Day."

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—**jack mc duff** performs through Oct. 23. The **phil woods** quintet begins an engagement on Oct. 25. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **les paul** leads a trio. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Wednesdays through Saturdays, **donald johnston** is the featured pianist. Dining.



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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		DEC. 20 8PM	DEC. 21 8PM	DEC. 22 OPENING NIGHT 6:45PM	DEC. 23 8PM	DEC. 24 2 & 8PM
DEC. 25 —	DEC. 26 —	DEC. 27 8PM	DEC. 28 8PM	DEC. 29 8PM	DEC. 30 8PM	DEC. 31 2 & 8PM
JAN.1 3PM JAN. 8 3PM	JAN. 2 —	JAN. 3 8PM	JAN. 4 8PM	JAN. 5 8PM	JAN. 6 8PM	JAN. 7 2 & 8PM

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KAREN CALDICOTT

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Singer NNENNA FREELON continues through Oct. 22. Freelon hasn't yet become the jazz diva she was touted as a while back; but with a new release, "Heritage," and a couple of years of refining her stagecraft, she's ready to give it another shot. EVELYN BLAKEY AND FRIENDS are here on Oct. 23. Beginning Oct. 25: the ERIC REED trio. Bandleader Wynton Marsalis has a real ear for pianists, and Eric Reed, his latest hire, is no exception. Reed knows his Hancock and his Tyner, but a distinctive vein of gospel also enriches his work.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, and a piano. LEE MUSIKER and PAT O'LEARY team up on Oct. 19-22. On Oct. 23: singer TESS MARSALIS performs with CARLOS MC KINNEY.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—John Zorn's COBRA performs on Oct. 23.

METROPOLIS, 31 Union Square W. (675-2300)—On Oct. 21-23: singer SUSANNAH MC CORKLE appears with a quartet. One of the divas of the cabaret/jazz scene, McCorkle has a fluid repertoire that ranges from master craftsmen like Porter and Mercer to the Brazilian tunesmiths Jobim and Bonfa. Monday nights, catch CON-TRI-BUTION, a reggae-tinged jazz collective. Tuesdays are given over to the GEORGE GEE ORCHESTRA, a seventeen-piece swing band.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—Vocalist/pianist HADDA BROOKS entertains every Tuesday through Saturday. On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA, a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. AMANDA MC BROOM will hold forth through Nov. 12. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor and swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band and Phoebe Légère; Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and the Kit McClure sextet; and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Borscht, blini, and other things to make the heart beat faster. JULIE WILSON appears on Oct. 23.

SQUIRE, 216 Seventh Ave., at 23rd St. (727-8387)—A modest jazz hangout in Chelsea. Oct. 20: The TIM WITMER quartet.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—With good reason, JIMMY SCOTT (who performs through Oct. 23) has dropped the "little" that used to front his name. There's nothing diminutive about this fine singer's talent. With his quirky way of looking from one side of the room to the other, he seems to be conducting a discussion. He's always in control musically, too; even on songs you've heard dozens of times before, he makes you listen for the next lyric as if it were a password to love and happiness. Seize the opportunity to see a man who counts Ray Charles and Madonna among his admirers. The HANK JONES trio takes over on Oct. 25.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—JOE LOVANO'S UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE continues through Oct. 23. Dust never settles on Lovano, an exceptional saxophonist who seems to juggle different bands the way others change their socks. The intriguing configuration this time features vocalist Judi Silvano, trumpeter Tim Hagans, and pianist Kenny Werner. The TERENCE BLANCHARD quartet begins on Oct. 25. The VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA holds sway on Mondays.

VISIONES, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. On Oct. 19-22, check out TANA REID.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Pianist JOANNE BRACKEEN and bassist CALVIN HILL are here through Oct. 22. Starting Oct. 24: Hill joins forces with a couple of fellow-journeymen, pianist JUNIOR MANCE and baritone-sax player JOE TEMPERLEY, to prove that there's strength in numbers.

ROCK, ETC.

ACADEMY, 234 W. 43rd St.—The JESUS AND MARY CHAIN are here Oct. 21-22, with guests MAZZY STAR. A night of modern-rock collage. In the mid-eighties, the Jesus and Mary Chain conquered the English charts with a bracing mix of bubblegum harmonies, searing guitar feedback, and thick Velvet Underground atmospherics. Mazzy Star, currently enjoying flavor-of-the-month status on the alternative charts, is cut from the same mold, but the band turns down the guitar to showcase Hope Sandoval's haunting, Nico-inspired vocals. Velvet Crush will also appear. For concert information, call 249-8870.

A.K.A., 77 W. Houston St., at Wooster St. (673-7325)—Jazz, hip-hop, and world beat meet in this small, velvet-draped club. Oct. 20: The GEFKENS headline a bill of bracing alternative rock.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—The crowd-pleasing doo-wop act ROCKAPELLA will make an appearance on Oct. 20. On Oct. 21, check out DAVE ALVIN & THE GUILTY MEN, with Luther Allison. Former Renaissance vocalist ANNIE HASLAM stops by on Oct. 22.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Blues guitarist SMOKEY SMOTHERS lays it down Oct. 18-22.

CLEOPATRA SUPPER CLUB, 327 W. 44th St (262-1111)—Live music, belly dancing, and an honest-to-God whirling dervish, every Wednesday through Sunday.

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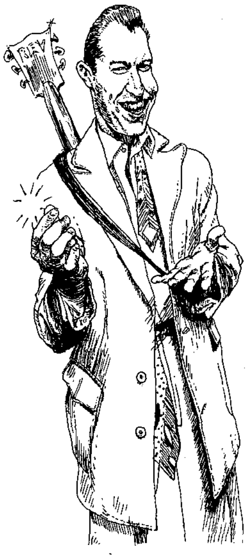
NIGHT LIFE—Cont'd

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—Oct. 21-22: Don't miss **TROUBLE FUNK.** Based in Washington, D.C., Trouble Funk is perhaps the best-known exponent of go-go music, a churning, percussion-drenched funk that hurls bodies into motion. With Screaming Headless Torsos. Every Monday in October, Sonic Youth guitarist **LEE RANALDO** curates a free evening of noise and art. Wednesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **LADY BUNNY** is your hostess every Tuesday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. **MARK MULCAHY** performs on Oct. 21. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Flannery's, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).



The Reverend Horton Heat at Tramps.

Irving Plaza, *17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.* (777-6800)—Oct. 20: Check out **LOVE SPIT LOVE,** a new combo fronted by raspy-voiced former Psychedelic Fur, Richard Butler. **FRENTE!** appears on Oct. 21. This Australian pop outfit offers gently atmospheric songs, delivered by yet another female singer with a wispy, girlish voice. With **GIGOLO AUNTS.** The garrulous **DR. JOHN** brings his inimitable vocals and soulful piano savvy here on Oct. 22, with guest **SHERMAN ROBERTSON.** . . . ¶ Sunday nights, when Irving Plaza becomes the Continental Club, West Coast Swing and the Lindy Hop are the main attractions. Dancing from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Kaptain Banana, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—French cabaret *en traveste* returns to SoHo. Ten dancers re-create the Court of Versailles, a carnival in Rio, Marlene Dietrich, and the Andrews Sister. There's also a singing gorilla. Dining.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—**OZRIC TENTACLES** slither in on Oct. 23. The Tentacles, who hail from England and dress suspiciously like the groovy squatters in "In the Name of the Father," play aggressive instrumental music rife with Middle Eastern scales and other tabouli-flavored references. The band has a tendency toward psychedelia—strobe lights, fog machines, ganja advocacy—but they're more interesting than your average hippies. Wednesday night is Disco 2000.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side Blues. On Oct. 19: **DR. HECTOR & THE GROOVE INJECTORS,** with **DRU LOMBARD. BILLY C. FARLOW** arrives on Oct. 21.

Mercury Lounge, *217 E. Houston* St. (260-4700)—On Oct. 24, catch **DAVID GRAY,** a promising young folk-rocker with a wry, sometimes gloomy sensibility. **MATT KEATING** will also perform. **HOMER EROTIC** plays on Oct. 25, with **SOPHIA'S TOY.**

Paddy Reilly's Music Bar, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** usually plays on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, *and the occasional cha-cha. Oct. 22 belongs* to **FRANKIE RUIZ.** Dining.

Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—On Oct. 19-20: **BOB DYLAN** completes a three-night engagement. His Bobness performs in our area rather sporadically nowadays, and word is that his live show is in peak form. Not to be missed. Also, be sure to catch opening act **SHERYL CROW,** whose current album, "Tuesday Night Music Club," is full of smart, sexy tunes. (You've heard at least one of them, the breezy hit single *"All* I Wanna Do.") In concert, Crow's raw-whiskey soprano sounds even stronger than it does on disk, with definite traces of Bonnie and Janis.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Oct. 19: A musical tribute to reggae great Peter Tosh. Tuesday Nights, S.O.B.'s presents Soul Kitchen, an evening of seventies funk and R. & B. Dining.

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—One of Brazil's most popular rock bands, **PARALAMAS,** will be here on Oct. 23. Thursday nights belong to **GIANT STEP,** a roving collective of musicians, rappers, and d.j.s who mix jazz, funk, and hip-hop.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—The riff-crazy Boston-based trio **SEBADOH** headlines on Oct. 20. **ALVIN LEE,** of Ten Years After, stops by on Oct. 21, with Nine Below Zero. The **REVEREND HORTON HEAT,** a latter-day rockabilly hero, keeps the faith on Oct. 22. Having begun his career by playing guitar in a Texas juvenile-correction facility, the Reverend Mr. Heat has for the past eight years entertained audiences across the country with his Vegas-style antics and irreverent sermons, which he delivers between songs. And what other rocker can boast about opening for Dolly Parton and stage diving for the Cramps. Speaking of the Cramps, don't miss opening act **SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS,** whose vocalist sounds like the Cramps' Lux Interior—after a root canal. With Tenderloin.

Webster Hall, *125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)*—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Spoken-word artist **MAGGIE ESTEP** says interesting things on Oct. 20, with her usual musical accomplices, **I LOVE EVERYBODY.** On Oct. 21: **JACKOPIERCE,** with 22 Brides.

• •

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Songs from our own hit parade.

BLUE EDEN (Neil Young, "Sleeps with Angels").

SUPERSTAR (Sonic Youth, "If I Were a Carpenter").

BASKET CASE (Green Day, "Dookie").

LONE STAR SONG *(Grant Lee Buffalo,* "Mighty Joe Moon").

WHAT'S THE FREQUENCY, KENNETH? (R.E.M., "Monster").

SCREENWRITER'S BLUES (Soul Coughing, "Ruby Vroom").

MAMOUNA (Bryan Ferry, "Mamouna").

LIVE FOREVER (Oasis, "Definitely Maybe").

WHIP-SMART (Liz Phair, "Whip-Smart").

AS I AM (Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, "Pure and Simple").

BORN ON A TRAIN (Magnetic Fields, "The Charm of the Highway Strip").

AM I WRONG (Love Spit Love, "Love Spit Love").

FIVE LONG YEARS (Eric Clapton, "From the Cradle").

EVIE'S TEARS (Freedy Johnston, "This Perfect World").

THIS IS THE BIG TIME *(Jim Lauderdale,* "Pretty Close to the Truth").

SPARKS WILL FLY (The Rolling Stones, "Voodoo Lounge").

TO THE END (Blur, "Parklife").

WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN (Grant Lee Buffalo, "If I Were a Carpenter").

JARRETT HUDDLESTON

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ART

Bound and Determined

In "The Books: Read 'em and Weep," an exhibition now at the Matthew Marks Gallery (1018 Madison Avenue; through November 26), the San Francisco artist Jonathan Hammer provides ironic Bibles for adepts of the art-as-religion cult. Collaborating with other artists and writers, Hammer has adapted the traditionally decorative medium of bookbinding, creating outrageously ornate volumes that comment on and sometimes caricature the art works and writings they contain. Displayed open and upright in vitrines, Hammer's untouchable tomes have the looming presence of sculptures. They seem to aspire to the rarefaction of Byzantine Gospels even as they blasphemously indulge godless whims.

Hammer's collaborators include the artists John Baldessari, Alexis Rockman, Donald Baechler, Lari Pittman, and Pat Steir, and the writers Dennis Cooper and John Yau, among others. The Rockman book, "Green Lorca," features inlays of semiprecious stones as well as exotic leathers, like snakeskin and stingray. The materials offer a subtle counterpoint to Rockman's free illustrations of a García Lorca text, which depict diabolical, menacing scenes of a poisoned environment. For "Whoever of This Flock," Dennis Cooper was commissioned to write a narrative for Lari Pittman's work. Cooper's tales of sexual obsessions and murderous drives function as sardonic captions for Pittman's stringently controlled graphics; Hammer's binding—of cowhide, sharkskin, and pigskin—is decorated with scatological and S & M designs. Vying with and sometimes overwhelming their contents, Hammer's books are the testament of an impudent sensibility that won't settle for anything less than the last word.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Willem de Kooning: Paintings." . . . ¶ "The Photographs of Édouard Baldus: Landscapes and Monuments of France." Shots from the nineteenth century. . . . ¶ "Ominous Hush: The Thunderstorm Paintings of Martin Johnson Heade." . . . ¶ "Origins of Impressionism" begins with paintings seen at the historic and influential Salon of 1859 and includes nudes, landscapes, and still-lifes. . . . ¶ Gowns, daywear, and costume jewelry by Mme. Grès, a French designer active from 1930 to 1988, are on display in the Costume Institute. . . . ¶ The roof garden is open through the end of October. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"A Century of Artists Books." Opens Oct. 23. . . . ¶ "New Photography 10." Opens Oct. 20. . . . ¶ "Mapping" features some twenty works of art that incorporate maps. . . . ¶ "American Politicians: Photographs from 1843 to 1993" includes a Mathew Brady photograph of Abraham Lincoln. . . . ¶ "Cy Twombly: A Retrospective." Nearly a hundred works, mostly paintings, by this heir to Abstract Expressionism. The show begins with Twombly's assemblage sculptures and ends with a new painting series, done this year, "The Four Seasons." (A concurrent show of his works is at the Gagosian gallery.) . . . ¶ "Drawing in Black and White: A Selection of Contemporary Works from the Collection." . . . ¶ "The Prints of Louise Bourgeois." (There are two installations by Bourgeois at the Blum gallery.) (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-68." (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, from 10 to 6, and Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—"Japanese Art After 1945: Scream Against the Sky." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Jess: A Grand Collage, 1951-1993." Jess's world has room for everything. The quirky Bay Area collagist and painter's work falls into three categories: dense phantasmagoric collages, painstakingly pieced together from the artist's enormous collection of visual sources; "Salvages," found canvases over which the artist has painted a second image; and "Translations," heavily impastoed oils that faithfully transfer onto canvas found images such as Victorian engravings, a photograph of the Beatles, medical illustrations, etc. . . . ¶ "Neil Jenney: Natural Rationalism." Five paintings, including "North America Abstracted" (1978-80), that illustrate Jenney's response to the American landscape tradition. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"Royal Tombs of Sipán." Gold, silver, and gilded copper objects of the Moche, a pre-Inca civilization of northern Peru and one of the world's major ancient civilizations. The curators are probably right to identify Sipán as the richest burial site ever excavated in the New World. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Realms of Heroism: Indian Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum." . . . ¶ Dale Chihuly's "The Brooklyn Wall," an installation of blown glass, is on view in the lobby. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Revivals! Diverse Traditions: 1920-1945." The second installment in a project devoted to the history of American craft in the twentieth century. Opens Oct. 20. . . . ¶ "Form and Light: Contemporary Glass from the Permanent Collection." Opens Oct. 20. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"An Enduring Legacy: The Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection." (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Bard Graduate Center, 18 W. 86th St.—"Baroque Splendor: The Art of the Hungarian Goldsmith" includes gilt silver vessels, jewelry, and armor from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, during Hungary's occupation by the Turks, when its artisans were integrating elements of their traditional style with Western European baroque. Through Oct. 30. (Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8:30.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—"Cartographies: Fourteen Artists from Latin America." (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"At the Dragon Court." Chinese embroidery from the collection of Schuyler V. R. Cammann. Opens Oct. 20. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Good Offices and Beyond: The Evolution of the Workplace" focusses on how the offices of the seventies and eighties incorporated the technological advances of those decades. . . . ¶ "The Structure of Style: Dutch Modernism in the Applied Arts 1880-1930." Selected ceramics, magazine covers, and glassware, among other objects, detail a pe-

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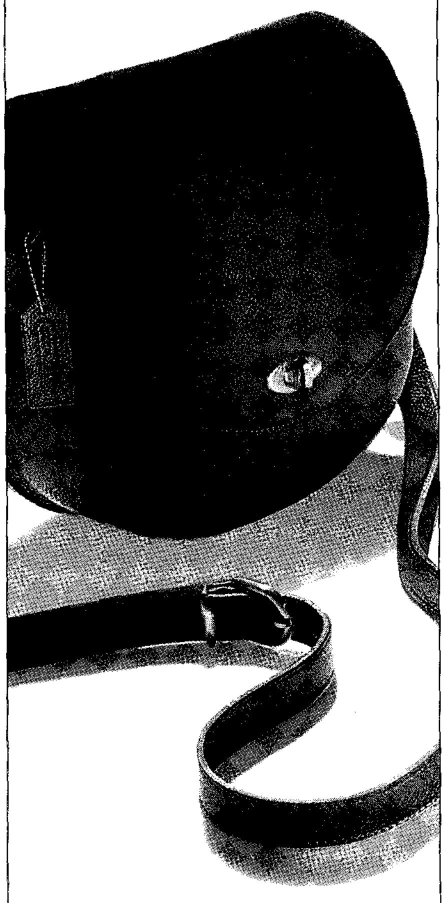

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riod of increasing industrialization in Europe. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—"Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré." . . . ¶ "Andy Warhol: The Last Supper Paintings." . . . ¶ Irish artist James Coleman's "Projected Images, 1972-94" includes "La Tache Aveugle," "Seeing for Oneself," and "I.N.I.T.I.A.L.S." . . . ¶ "Rest," by Franz West, an installation of twenty-seven couches on the center's roof. . . . ¶ Work by Dan Graham. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—Sèvres porcelain, Limoges enamel, and paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt, Whistler, and El Greco are all on view in this former residence of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919). (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Jewish Life in Tsarist Russia: A World Rediscovered." . . . ¶ "Mario Cavaglieri: The Glittering Years, 1912-1922" features thirty-six paintings, both interiors and portraits, by Cavaglieri (1887-1969), an Italian Jew, whose work recalls the bright colors and thick brushwork of the Fauves. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"The Thaw Collection: Master Drawings and New Acquisitions." The word "great" is overused in the art world: it should be reserved for occasions like this one. Eugene and Clare Thaw's drawing collection, a promised gift to the Morgan, ranges freely from Mantegna to Jackson Pollock, with one unifying characteristic: quality. Albrecht Altdorfer's tiny drawing of lovers in a landscape is rendered with breathtaking precision; G. D. Tiepolo's flawless "Last Illness of Punchinello" will make you laugh out loud. All the major schools are represented, but the French drawings are especially fine, from a sparkling gouache of the Villa d'Este, by Fragonard, to Étienne Louis Boullée's highly finished drawing of a visionary library. Not to mention the Cézannes. This is the only major drawing exhibition in New York this season, and it really *is* great. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

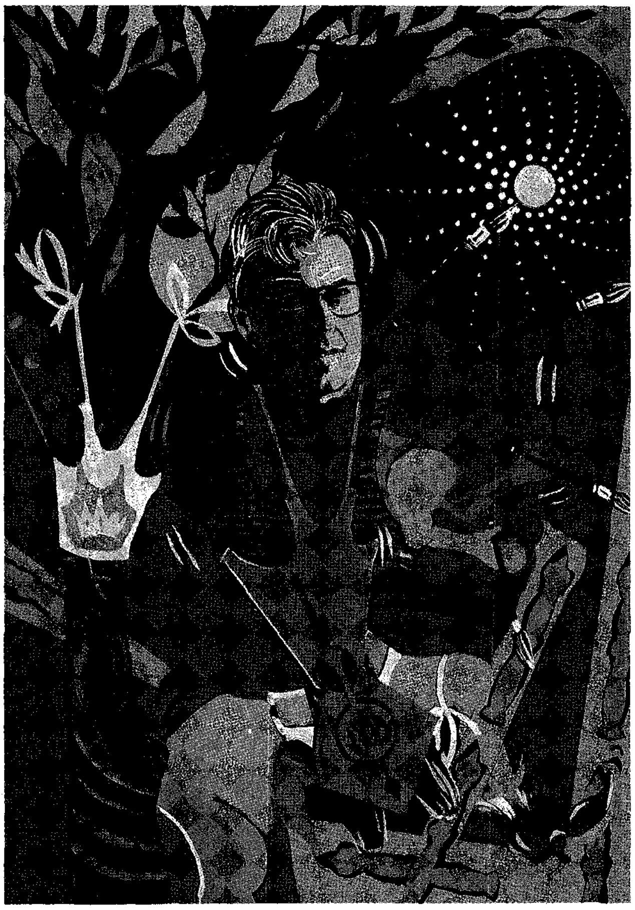
Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"Recovering Popular Culture," the second part of the series "Artists Talk Back: Visual Conversations with El Museo," includes a bodega exhibit, work by contemporary craftspeople, and an exhibit pairing work from the permanent collection with that of contemporary artists. Next to woven baskets are Rene David Chamizo's undulating rattan wall hangings; the chock-full bodega setup ties in nicely with Pepón Osorio's "La Cama," a heavily decorated bed. If the theme of the show occasionally seems forced, the momentum makes up for it. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, noon to 7.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway—"Exhibition-*ism*: Museums and African Art." (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays, noon to 8; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Every Picture Tells a Story: Word and Image in American Folk Art." Everything from a pre-Revolutionary illustrated birth certificate to a more contemporary text: "Try Me," painted on tin roofing. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"City Farmers: Operation GreenThumb." . . . ¶ "The Making of a Mural: Reginald Marsh at the Custom House." . . . ¶ "Beals' Bohemians: Photographs by Jessie Tarbox Beals." Greenwich Village during the early nineteen-hundreds, as captured by America's first woman photojournalist. Closes Oct. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New Museum, 583 Broadway—"Visiting Hours: An Installation by Bob Flanagan in Collaboration with Sheree Rose." Flanagan, who has cystic fibrosis, will hold public visiting hours from his hospital-bed installation, where he will be available to discuss his illness and masochism. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, noon to 8.)



Lari Pittman at Gorney Modern.

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"e.e. cummings @ 100: A Centennial Exhibition." . . . ¶ "The Raw and the Cooked: Images of Food from the Renaissance to the Present." On the menu are a Dürer engraving of Adam and Eve sharing an apple, and a Berenice Abbott photograph of potatoes. . . . ¶ "Broken Rules and Double Crosses: Ken Campbell, an Artist's Books." (Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—"New Performance in Found Spaces: Documentary Photographs by Tom Brazil and Dona Ann McAdams" features Brazil and McAdams' pictures of performance art from the early seventies to today, as well as black-and-white shots of "happenings," by Peter Moore (1932-1994). (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Works from every period of the Japanese-American sculptor's life (1904-88) are installed in a garden and open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. (Open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—The first exhibit in the museum's newly refurbished and expanded home is "Louis Armstrong: A Cultural Legacy." Original recordings, a trumpet from the twenties, and work by Stuart Davis, Weegee, and Annie Leibovitz, among others, chronicle the life of America's most famous trumpeter. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Socrates Sculpture Park, Broadway at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City—"International '94" includes work by Gunilla Bandolin, Mark di Suvero, and Nancy Rubins. (Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"From the Studio: Artists-in-Residence, 1993-94" features work by Bright Bimpong, Russell Malcolm Hamilton, and Marilyn Nance. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(*Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. The following lists lead off with new shows.)*

Robert Berlind—Paintings of ponds and streams. Opens Oct. 20. Through Nov. 26. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

Barnett Newman (1905-70) / **Kiki Smith**—Paintings and drawings from 1944, when Newman resumed his career after a wartime hiatus, to 1949. / Collages and lithographs—new mediums for the artist—depicting body parts. Opens Oct. 21. Through Nov. 26. (Pace, 32 E. 57th St.)

Richard Serra—Black-and-white crayon-stick drawings of loose rectangles. Opens Oct. 22. Through Dec. 23. (Gagosian, Madison Ave. at 76th St.)

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Georg Baselitz—An excellent show of works on paper that this German neo-expressionist made in the sixties. Baselitz is at home in several mediums: India ink, gouache, watercolor, even crayon. His red and black ballpoint-pen portrait of Antonin Artaud is one of the show's standouts. Through Nov. 5. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

Xavier Corberó—Stone never looked lighter than it does after this Catalan master carver has handled it. "Tender Security Buttonhole," hewn and sanded from a marble slab less than half an inch thick, seems to flutter like a pennant. These sculptures have a cool grace and elegance, even though they lack any weightier virtues. Through Nov. 3. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Elaine de Kooning (1918-89)—With Willem de Kooning's retrospective sailing majestically into the Met, this suite of portraits of men—and a solitary self-portrait—is well timed and apt for a female pioneer in a very male-dominated movement. Elaine de Kooning's work often shares formal similarities with her husband's, particularly when he is the subject, but she never rivals his tonal complexity. A 1953 work, "Bill," has a weighty, carnal presence—it's almost reminiscent of Giacometti—but the face is a ghostly blur; a canvas of the dapper critic Harold Rosenberg, on the other hand, depicts a head in the vortex of a brilliantly colored scrawl. *Through Nov. 19. (Washburn, 20 W. 57th St.)*

Fausto Melotti (1901-86)—Dada, the early-twentieth-century art movement that celebrated the flimsy and the ephemeral, seems to be eternal. The witty constructions of this Italian sculptor, who died in 1986, are one incarnation. The more offhand and extemporaneous pieces work best. "In the Future," which looks hastily thrown together and indifferently whitewashed, is a three-dimensional doodle, an airy-light arabesque. But the more

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ART—Cont'd

finished "Sailing Beast" falls flat. Through Nov. 12. (Baldacci, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jules Olitski—A bright star of sixties colorfield painting, Olitski was always the frothiest and most confectionary of that optically hedonistic lot. But the light has gone out of his recent works, which feature bizarrely thick impastos of dark, metallic acrylic paint applied in tempestuously swirling patterns. The late Clement Greenberg thought that Olitski was our greatest living painter, and for that reason alone one should take a look at these latest efforts, though they do little to justify Greenberg's esteem. Through Oct. 29. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St.)

Sarah Supplee—These oils and pastels of crisp upstate New York landscapes have, at their best, the luminous, numinous power of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, minus the idealistic overtones. "Vista with a House" has a shiny-plastic prettiness that veers perilously near tacky, but it still has a whiff of real earth about it. "Late Walk" is a view of a deserted country road from the walker's point of view; the autumn light is as eerie as the opening shot for a Rod Serling production. Through Oct. 28. (Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St.)

Rainer Fetting—Paintings of New York cityscapes, flowers, and nudes, by a German artist. Through Nov. 16. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Gary Hume—Blobby figural works by a young British painter, featuring lacquered, candy-colored surfaces. Through Nov. 26. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

William King—A retrospective covering forty years of work in wood. Through Nov. 26. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

Joan Mitchell (1926-92)—Sombre Abstract Expressionist paintings from 1964, following the death of the artist's father. Through Nov. 12. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Ben Nicholson (1894-1982) / **William Tillyer**—A retrospective of paintings and drawings by the British abstractionist. / Landscapes, done in broad brushstrokes, by a British artist. Through Nov. 12. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Linda Sokolowski—Landscapes and drawings of figures in interiors. Through Nov. 12. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Edward Sorel—Work from the artist's new book, "First Encounters: A Book of Memorable Meetings." Through Oct. 29. (Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St.)

Frank Stella—Recent work, including two large-scale, site-specific works. Through Nov. 1. (Knodler, 19 E. 70th St.)

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957)—A survey of the Russian artist's work from the twenties. Through Nov. 5. (Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Manolo Valdés—Paintings and sculptures by a Spanish artist. Through Nov. 5. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Carroll Dunham—New paintings. Opens Oct. 22. Through Nov. 12. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Lucas Samaras—Gray formica sculptures in the shapes of cubes and trapezoids. Opens Oct. 21. Through Nov. 26. (Pace, 142 Greene St.)

Theodore Waddell—Landscapes with cattle, sheep, and horses, and freestanding sculptures of cows and sheep, by an artist-rancher in Montana. Opens Oct. 22. Through Nov. 26. (Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St.)

Darren Waterston—Romantic landscapes. Opens Oct. 22. Through Nov. 12. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

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Lari Pittman—Gaudy paintings with recurrent images of devilish-looking Puritans, credit cards, and wiseacre phrases ("Cum n' Git It!"). Pittman's paintings, analogues for fear, are furiously cluttered with emblems of lust and loathing. Per square inch, he offers more visual incident than the creator of "Where's Waldo?" Through Oct. 29. (Gorney Modern, 100 Greene St.)

Siah Armajani—Recent sculpture. Through Nov. 26. (Protetch, 560 Broadway.)

Louise Bourgeois—An installation titled "The Red Rooms." Through Dec. 15. (A show of the artist's prints is on view at the Museum of Modern Art.) (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

James Rosenquist—Large paintings, in a show celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the artist's first show at the gallery. Through Nov. 12. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

Cy Twombly—"Untitled Painting," a monumental, primarily abstract triptych, begun in Italy in 1979. Through Dec. 17. (A retrospective of the artist's work is at the Museum of Modern Art.) (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

Stephanie Weber—Abstract paintings done on wooden panels, with an emphasis on texture. Through Nov. 12. (Haller, 560 Broadway.)

"Funny Farm"—A group show featuring outsider and unusual work, such as potato battleships and aluminum-foil weapons. Through Nov. 7. (Gallery 128, 128 Rivington St.)

"Return of the Hero"—A show of three older and three younger German painters, among them Georg Baselitz and Martin Kippenberger. Through Dec. 17. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St.)

ANTIQUES AND AUCTIONS

Fall Antiques Show—After the bicentennial, antique collectors turned to Americana. This show, now in its sixteenth year, was the first to hop on the bandwagon, offering American folk art, country furniture, quilts, garden fixtures, Indian pottery, and so forth. (Pier 92, Twelfth Ave. at 52nd St. Oct. 20-21, from 11 to 9; Oct. 22, from 11 to 8; and Oct. 23, from 11 to 6.)

Sparklers—As part of its ongoing dispersal of works from the collection of the late Alice Tully, the renowned philanthropist who died last year, Christie's Magnificent Jewels auction, on Oct. 20, at 10 A.M., will feature her diamond rings. (502 Park Ave., at 59th St. For further information, call 546-1119.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Bill Brandt—Studies of English society and abstract female nudes. Through Oct. 29. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Isabel Muñoz—Photographs of flamenco and tango dancing in Madrid and Buenos Aires. Through Nov. 12. (Saul, 560 Broadway.)

Richard Rothman—Photographs of abject, urban landscapes and architecture. Through Nov. 6. (White Columns, 154 Christopher St.)

Andres Serrano—Recent photographs of Budapest. Through Oct. 26. (Cooper, 155 Wooster St.)

Burk Uzzle—Three decades of photography. Through Nov. 2. (Leica, 670 Broadway.)

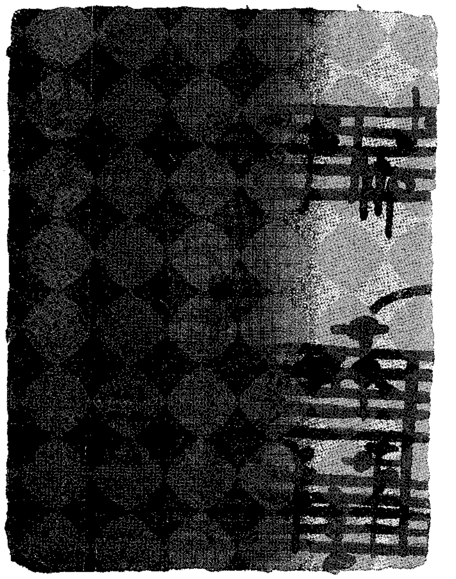
Garry Winogrand—New York City burlesque houses, circa 1954. Opens Oct. 19. Through Nov. 26. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St.)

Georgi Zelma—Images of Central Asia. Through Oct. 29. (Schickler, 52 E. 76th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave. at 94th St.—A retrospective of the work of Cornell Capa, featuring work from *Life* and other magazines. . . . ¶ Forty images of contemporary Russian life, by Hans-Jürgen Burkhard. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Talking Pictures," an exhibition that features photographs by more than fifty people not generally associated with the medium—Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson, Diane Keaton—and taped commentaries on the work. . . . ¶ Photographs by Arthur Rothstein, who is best known for his work for *Look*. . . . ¶ More than thirty black-and-white photographs of Appalachian Kentuckians, by Shelby Lee Adams. Through Nov. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of the City of New York, and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.)



CLASSICAL MUSIC

All That Glitters

Some critics argue that international music competitions reward bland proficiency while slighting exceptional, but idiosyncratic, talent. In fact, almost no gold-medal winners in recent memory have gone on to sustain A-list careers, and many stimulating soloists have gotten where they are without the benefit of competition victories. It is also true that the votes of opinionated jury members are most likely to overlap on "consensus players," whose performances concentrate on the reliable and the familiar. That's why discerning music lovers, managers, and critics pay as much attention to the also-rans as to the top prize-winners.

The Armenian pianist Armen Babakhanian, who plays his New York début recital on October 24, at Weill Recital Hall, is a case in point. Though he did win gold medals at competitions in Bulgaria and Latvia, at the big American pianofests the top prize keeps eluding him: he took second prize at the 1991 Gina Bachauer Competition, fifth in the 1993 Cliburn, and third at this year's Kapell. Still, much of the buzz at these events was generated not by the gold medallists but by Babakhanian's brooding, fiercely etched, often disturbing interpretations—just the sort of playing that can leave a jury divided. By helping underwrite his seventeen-city North American tour this fall, the Cliburn Foundation (which runs the Cliburn Competition) demonstrates how a competition's service to its entrants need not end once the spotlight dims. A touch of gold can help a young musician's reputation, but in the long run it's no substitute for talent, practice, luck—and the sort of exposure that participation in a major competition can provide.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO**, with Carolyn James, Dawn Upshaw, Susanne Mentzer, Dwayne Croft, and Bryn Terfel; conducted by James Levine. (Oct. 19 at 8 and Oct. 22 at 1:30.) . . . **LA BOHÈME**, with Ainhoa Arteta, Lauren Flanigan, Richard Leech, and Kim Josephson; Michelangelo Veltri. (Oct. 20 at 8.) . . . **ARABELLA**, with Kiri Te Kanawa, Marie McLaughlin, Natalie Dessay, Helga Dernesch, David Kuebler, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and Donald McIntyre; Christian Thielemann. (Oct. 21 at 8.) . . . With Wolfgang Brendel as Mandryka. (Oct. 25 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA**, with Carol Vaness, Luciano Pavarotti, and Sherrill Milnes; Mr. Levine. (Oct. 22 at 8.) . . . **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA** (with Maria Guleghina, Kristján Jóhannsson, and Timothy Noble) and **PAGLIACCI** (with Diana Soviero, Vladimir Atlantov, and Leo Nucci); Christian Badea. (Oct. 24 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—**PRINCE IGOR**, with Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet, Robert Perry, and Carlo Scibelli; conducted by Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Oct. 20 at 8.) . . . **MEFISTOFELE**, by Boito, with Maryanne Telese, Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet, Allan Glassman, and Stephen West; Christopher Keene. (Oct. 21 at 8.) . . . **THE MAGIC FLUTE**, sung in English, with Susan Rosenbaum, Lorraine Ernest, Dennis McNeil, Daniel Mobbs, and Leroy Lehr; Scott Bergeson. (Oct. 22 at 1:30.) . . . **LA BOHÈME**, with Eva Zseller, Nina Warren, Stephen Mark Brown, and John Packard; Mr. Keene. (Oct. 22 and Oct. 25 at 8.) . . . **CARMEN**, with Jean Stilwell, Abbie Furmansky, Michael Hayes, and Robert Perry; Joseph Colaneri. (Oct. 23 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. With supertitles for non-English-language productions.)

OPERA MANHATTAN—Members of the company perform a mélange of Massenet, including arias and scenes from "Thaïs," "Thérèse," "Le Cid," "Cendrillon," and "Cléopâtre." A benefit concert. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Oct. 19 at 8.)

"ROMANCE OF THE ROSE"—A medieval French masque, staged by the Mannes Camerata. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. 496-8524. Oct. 21 and Oct. 23 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—Zdenek Macal conducts Mussorgsky's "A Night on Bald Mountain," Stravinsky's Violin Concerto (with Cho-Liang Lin), and Berlioz' "Symphonie Fantastique." (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 20 and Oct. 22 at 8, Oct. 21 at 11 A.M., and Oct. 25 at 7:30.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY—Seiji Ozawa conducting. Oct. 19-20 at 8: Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," Bernstein's "Serenade for Strings" (with violinist Itzhak Perlman), an excerpt from John Williams' score for "Schindler's List," and Brahms' Symphony No. 4. (Carnegie Hall.) . . . ¶ Oct. 21 at 8: An all-Berlioz program, comprising the Overture and the "Royal Hunt and Storm" from "Les Troyens," the "Rêverie et Caprice" (for violin and orchestra, featuring the orchestra's concertmaster, Malcolm Lowe), and the New York première of the "Messe Solennelle," a recently discovered work of secondary stature, here featuring tenor Vinson Cole, baritone Gilles Cachemaille, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. (Avery Fisher Hall. . . . **NOTE:** Hugh Macdonald will deliver a pre-concert lecture on Berlioz' "Messe Solennelle," at 7, in the Kaplan Penthouse, in Lincoln Center's Rose Building.)

ORCHESTRA OF ST. LUKE'S—Roger Norrington conducts an all-Tchaikovsky program, comprising the symphonic ballad "Voyevoda," the Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Jon Kimura Parker), and the Symphony No. 5. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 22 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—Dennis Russell Davies conducts premières of works by Fred Lerdahl and Bun-Ching Lam (the latter featuring pipa player Wu Man), as well as Sessions' Symphony No. 8 and Henry Holden Huss's Piano Concerto, with Ian Hobson. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 23 at 3.)

ENGLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—Pinchas Zukerman conducts an orchestral version of the adagio from Bruckner's String Quintet and symphonies by Haydn (No. 22, the "Philosopher") and Mozart (No. 35, the "Haffner"); he doubles as violin soloist in Bach's Concerto for Violin and Oboe (along with Gordon Hunt) and in Dvořák's "Romance for Violin and Orchestra." (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 23 at 7:30.)

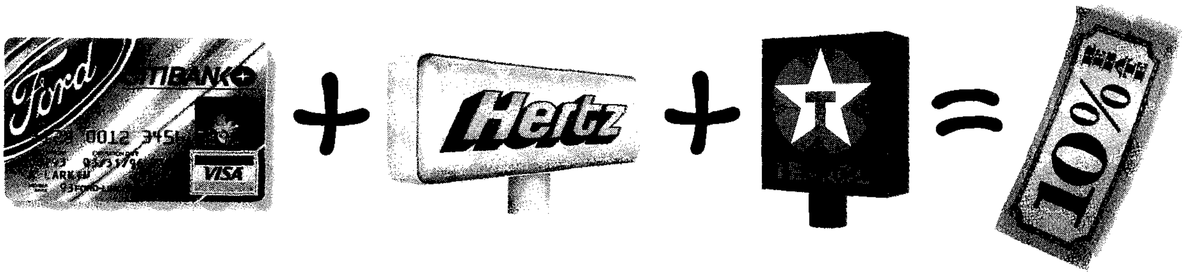
CLARION CONCERTS—Frederick Hammond directs music from Baroque Rome. (Kaye Playhouse, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Oct. 24 at 8.)

ST. THOMAS CHOIR—Gerre Hancock directs the choir of men and boys in Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms," the première of Gunther Schuller's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, and works by Randall Thompson, Walter Piston, and Ned Rorem; with organist Peter Stoltzfus and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 757-7013. Oct. 25 at 7:30.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA—Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Piston's Symphony No. 4, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with Gil Shaham), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 8. (Carnegie Hall. Oct. 25 at 8.)

RECITALS

MUSIC BY ART KREIGER—A retrospective of electronic and acoustic works, performed by the Cygnus Ensemble, pianist Aleck Karis, flutist



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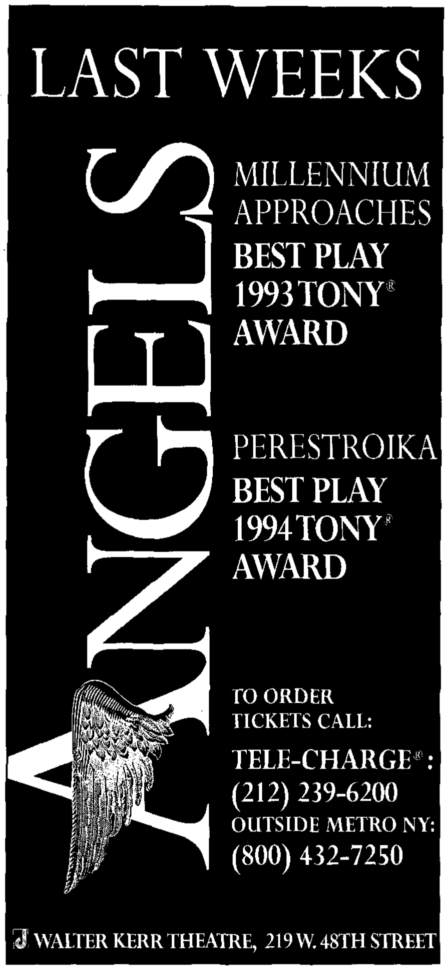
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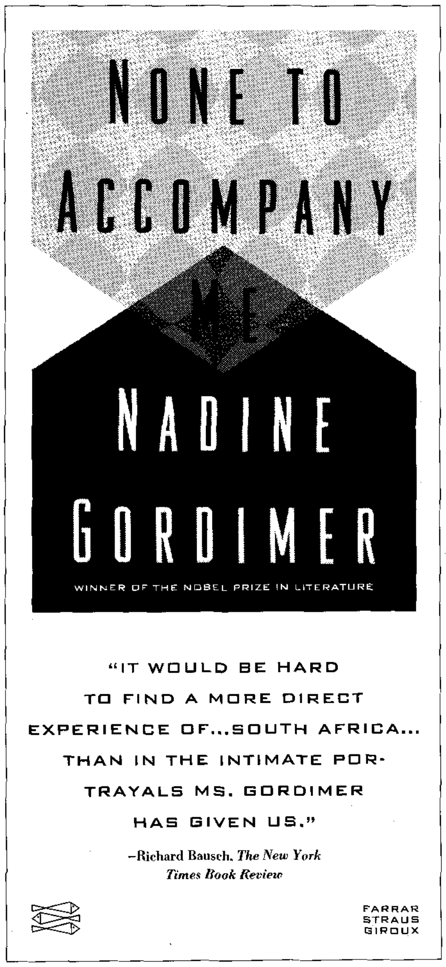
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–Richard Bausch, *The New York Times Book Review*

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

CLASSICAL MUSIC–Cont'd

Patricia Spencer, and clarinettist Allen Blustine. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 19 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Violinists Theodore Arm and Carmit Zori, violist Misha Amory, and cellist Fred Sherry perform Haydn's G-Major String Quartet (Op. 54, No. 1) and Webern's "Langsamer Satz"; classical guitarist David Starobin plays solo compositions by Giulio Regondi; and all join for Boccherini's E-Major Guitar Quintet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Oct. 20 at 7:30 and Oct. 23 at 4.)

Robert Mann Players—Violinist Robert Mann and his wife, Lucy Rowan Mann, narrate Stravinsky's chamber-theatre piece "L'Histoire du Soldat." (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Oct. 21 at 7.)

Valentina Lisitsa and Aleksei Kuznetsov—In their New York début recital, the husband-and-wife piano duo—laureates of the 1991 Murray Dranoff International Two Piano Competition—performs Bolcom's "Recuerdos," Busoni's "Improvisations on the Bach Chorale 'Wie wohl ist mir,'" Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 1, Saint-Saëns' expansion of Chopin's B-Flat-Minor Sonata, and Liszt's "Réminiscences de Don Juan." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Oct. 22 at 8.)

Colorado String Quartet—Performing Beethoven's D-Major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 3) and Brahms' B-Flat-Major Quartet (Op. 67). (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Oct. 23 at 11 A.M. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—In the first subscription concerts of the Society's twenty-sixth season, the Orion String Quartet (in residence with the organization this year) plays Beethoven's F-Major String Quartet (Op. 18, No. 1), violinist Elmar Oliveira and pianist David Golub perform Brahms' D-Minor Violin Sonata, and all join for Chausson's Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 21 at 8 and Oct. 23 at 5.)

Mykola Suk—The pianist will perform Beethoven's "Seven Bagatelles" (Op. 33), Bartók's "Out of Doors," Liszt's Sonata in B Minor, and three pieces from Sylvestrov's "Children's Music." (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 23 at 2.)

Richard Goode—The pianist performs Beethoven's Sonatas in C Minor (Op. 10, No. 1), E-Flat Major (Op. 31, No. 3), E Major (Op. 109), F Major (Op. 10, No. 2), and E-Flat Major (Op. 81a). (Avery Fisher Hall. Oct. 23 at 3.)

Si-Yo Music Society—Presenting Beethoven's Quintet for Piano and Winds, Saint-Saëns' Oboe Sonata, and Brahms' Horn Trio. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Oct. 23 at 3.)

Pieter Wispelwey—Cellist, performing early Beethoven, including variations after Handel and Mozart, and sonatas (Op. 5, No. 1 and No. 2); with John Gibbons assisting at the fortepiano. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Oct. 23 at 5.)

Bryn Terfel—In his New York début recital, the Welsh bass-baritone sings Schumann's "Liederkreis" (Op. 39) and Schubert's "Schwanengesang"; with pianist James Levine. (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 24 at 7:30.)

St. Lawrence String Quartet—The Canadian foursome plays quartets by Oswaldo Golijov (his "Yiddishbbuck"), Chris Paul Harman (his First), Shostakovich (his Seventh), and Beethoven (in A Minor, Op. 132). (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Oct. 24 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Armen Babakhanian—The pianist makes his New York début performing the Bach-Busoni Chaconne in D Minor, Prokofiev's Sonata No. 4, Bartók's Sonata, Morton Gould's "Ghost Waltzes," Chopin's C-Sharp-Minor Nocturne (Op. 27) and B-Minor Scherzo, and excerpts from Arno Babadjanian's "Six Pictures." (Weill Recital Hall. Oct. 24 at 8.)

Trio Passaggio—Italian and Dutch Baroque chamber works, performed by recorder player Matthias Maute, bassoonist Norbert Kunst, and harpsichordist Pieter Dirksen. Presented by Music Before 1800. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Oct. 25 at 8. For information about tickets, call 666-9266.)

Ying String Quartet—The familial foursome performs quartets by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1), Ralph Shapey (his Eighth, here receiving its première), and Dvořák (in A-Flat Major, Op. 105). (Alice Tully Hall. Oct. 25 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Or Would You Rather Be a Mule?—"Animal Farm," four paintings by Tim Rollins and K.O.S. depicting world leaders as barnyard animals, has been installed in the main waiting room at Grand Central Terminal. Look for Margaret Thatcher as a goose and Ronald Reagan as a rooster. . . . ¶ "Belts, Pulleys and Motors," a series of kinetic found-object sculptures and installations by Steve Gerberich, features a helicopter, a canoe/ship, and a train. (Mondays through Fridays, from 10 to 7, and Saturdays and Sundays, from noon to 5. No tickets necessary. Through Oct. 23.)

Leaves R Us—Wave Hill's annual Festival of Leaves will be a leaf peaker's paradise. Visitors can learn how to mulch, cook, and make rubbings of leaves. There will also be a group of dancers, Fall Foliage Fooleries, performing throughout the day. (Wave Hill, Independence Ave. at 249 St., the Bronx. 1-718 549-3200. Oct. 22-23, from 9 to 4:30.)

Howl—Murray, the dog from "Mad About You," and his pal Grand Marshal Al Roker will lead the pack at the A.S.P.C.A. Dog Walk '94: A Woofstock Revival. Humans, with or without dogs, are invited to walk around Central Park to raise money for New York's abandoned and stray animals. Oct. 23, from 9:30 to 3; the walk begins at 11. For more information, call 876-7708.

White Hot—Edmund White will give two readings from his collection of essays, "The Burning Library." (A Different Light, 151 W. 19th St. Oct. 19 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ With Peter Cameron, who will read from his new novel, "The Weekend." (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Oct. 20 at 8.)

Bloc Unbound—Josef Škvorecký, Susan Sontag, and others will read from the work of Ivan Klíma and Milan Kundera, among others. (Stuyvesant High School auditorium, 345 Chambers St., at West St., Battery Park City. Oct. 20 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ "Eastern European Expatriate Club," an evening of poetry readings and live music. (Bohemian National Hall, 321 E. 73rd St. Oct. 21 at 9. Tickets at the door on the evening of the event.)

For Edward Estlin—in Just-fall, when E. E. Cummings would have turned a hundred, the Poetry Society of America will celebrate with readings by Elizabeth Alexander, X. J. Kennedy, and Brad Leithauser, on Oct. 24 at 8. A tour of the library's exhibit honoring the poet is offered at 7. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Prose Readings—Oct. 19 at 8: Tim O'Brien will read from his new novel, "In the Lake of the Woods." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 24 at 8: Alan Hollinghurst and Mark Merlis will read from their own novels. (A Different Light, 151 W. 19th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 24 at 8: Doris Lessing will read from her recently published autobiography, "Under My Skin." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Oct. 25 at 7: A reading of Mark Leyner's new play, "Young Bergdorf Goodman Brown." (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 25 at 7:30: Ian Frazier will read from his new book, "Family." (Community Bookstore, 143 Seventh Ave., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

Poetry Readings—Oct. 19 at 7: Marilyn Hacker. (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St., at

Waverly Pl. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 22 at 2: Elizabeth Macklin and Lloyd Schwartz. (New York Public Library, 96th Street Branch, 112 E. 96th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Oct. 24 at 7:30: Robert Creeley and Donald Revell. (Dia Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ Oct. 25 at 8: Carolyn Forché and Jane Miller. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

Your History—Oct. 21 at 4: Frances FitzGerald, Paul Johnson, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., and Howard Seretan will participate in a panel discussion, "The Teaching of American History Today." (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. Call 685-0008, ext. 347, for information about free tickets.)

Walks & Tours—Oct. 23, from noon to 6: The *Jersey Journal* and the Art Tour Coalition are co-sponsoring a free tour of Hoboken artists' studios. For more information, call 1-201 217-2480. . . . ¶ Oct. 25 at 5:30: The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation will offer a twilight tour of the neighborhood's waterfront. For more information, call 924-3895.

SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Giants—Vs. the Pittsburgh Steelers, on Oct. 23 at 1.

Jets—Their next home game is Nov. 6, when they'll host the Buffalo Bills.

HOCKEY

Where's The Puck?—At press time, the National Hockey League team owners rejected a contract proposal from the players' union, threatening the planned resumption of the schedule after a two-week hiatus. The following games will take place if a settlement is reached.

Rangers—Vs. the Los Angeles Kings, Oct. 20 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Jose Sharks, Oct. 23 at 7.

Islanders—Vs. the Florida Panthers, Oct. 22 at 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Vancouver Canucks, Oct. 25 at 7:30.

Devils—Vs. the Washington Capitals, Oct. 19 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Jose Sharks, Oct. 22 at 1:30.

(The Giants and the Jets play at Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands, 1-201 935-8111; the Rangers may play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900; and the Islanders at Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300.)

FOR KIDS

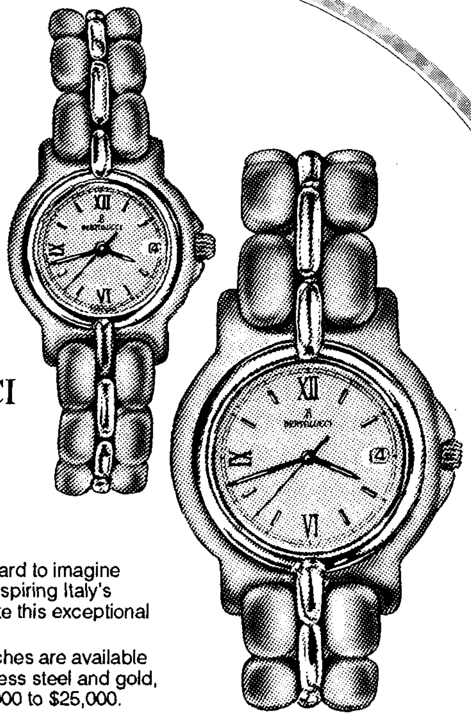
(A list of activities for children and their parents or other adults.)

Big Apple Circus—We know it's fall when this perennial favorite returns to Lincoln Center. The 1994 edition features Mummenschanz, the mime/puppetry/magic outfit. Performances begin Oct. 20 and run through Jan. 8. (Damrosch Park. For schedules and ticket information, call 268-0055.)

Music in the Air—The American Symphony Orchestra and classical cutup Peter Schickele get together to present a program called "Who Needs a Conductor Anyway?" Music by two of the three Bs—Bach and Brahms—is on the bill. Recommended ages: seven to thirteen. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Oct. 22 at 11 and 1.)

Boo!—Make masks for Halloween, at the Dana Discovery Center, in Central Park. (Harlem Meer, near Fifth Ave. and 110th St. Oct. 23, from 1 to 3. No tickets necessary.)

Classics Out Loud—Mary Beth Hurt reads from "Bedtime for Francis," and Peter Nadin reads from "The Wind in the Willows." (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Oct. 23 at 3. No tickets necessary.)



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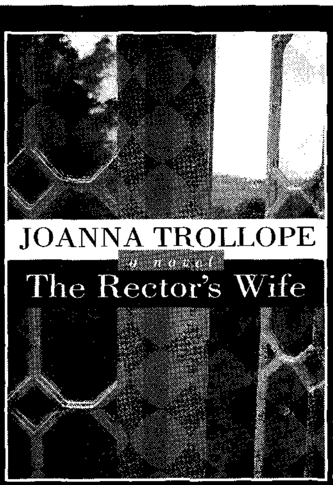

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RANDOM HOUSE

THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Bullets Over Broadway—Woody Allen's romantic comedy involving a playwright, actors, and mobsters in New York in the twenties. The cast includes John Cusack, Dianne Wiest, Jack Warden, Jennifer Tilly, and Chazz Palminteri. Allen collaborated with Doug McGrath on the screenplay. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening October 21. (Cinema I.)

Clerks—The first feature by twenty-three-year-old writer-director Kevin Smith chronicles a day in the life of an Asbury Park, New Jersey, convenience-store clerk. With Brian O'Halloran, Jeff Anderson, and Marilyn Ghigliotti. Opening October 19. (Angelika Film Center.)

L'Enfer—In Claude Chabrol's psychological thriller Paul and Nelly (François Cluzet and Emmanuelle Béart) are a happily married couple whose relationship deteriorates when Paul hears voices accusing his wife of infidelity. Written by Henri-Georges Clouzot. In French. Opening October 19. (Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Love Affair—Two star-crossed lovers meet, part, and plan to meet again—until fate steps in. Warren Beatty and Annette Bening follow in the footsteps of Charles Boyer and Irene Dunne ("Love Affair," 1939) and Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr ("An Affair to Remember," 1957), in the third Hollywood version of the tale. With Katharine Hepburn, Garry Shandling, Pierce Brosnan, and Kate Capshaw. The screenplay is by Beatty and Robert Towne. Directed by Glenn Gordon Caron. Opening October 21. (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Minbo—Juzo Itami ("Tampopo," "A Taxing Woman") wrote and directed this comedy about a hotel afflicted with loitering yakuzas—Japanese gangsters—and the two low-level employees who are ordered to clear them out. In Japanese. Opening October 19. (Cinema Village.)

Radioland Murders—Chaos engulfs the studios of a fledgling radio network as it prepares to go on the air for the first time. Mary Stuart Masterson, as the owner's secretary, stars in this comedy-mystery, set in 1939. With Brian Benben, Ned Beatty, Harvey Korman, Bobcat Goldthwait, Corbin Bernsen, and Christopher Lloyd. Written by George Lucas, Willard Huyck, and Gloria Katz, with Jeff Reno and Ron Osborn. Directed by Mel Smith. Opening October 21. (34th St. East, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and National Twin.)

Robert A. Heinlein's The Puppet Masters—Donald Sutherland stars as a desperate scientist in this thriller, based on Heinlein's science-fiction novel, about alien parasites who control the minds of their human hosts. With Eric Thal and Julie Warner. Written by David Goyer, Ted Elliott, and Terry Rossio. Directed by Stuart Orme. Opening October 21. (Village East Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Embassy.)

Vanya on 42nd Street—Louis Malle's play-within-a-film version of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya," with André Gregory directing the play (and playing himself) and Larry Pine, Wallace Shawn, Julianne Moore, and George Gaynes as the actors. The adaptation is by David Mamet. Opening October 19. (Anglelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 33.)

The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert—Paragons of camp become campers, of sorts, in this cult-pleasing tale of a transsexual (Terence Stamp) and two drag queens (Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce) who take a lip-synching act from Sydney to a resort in arid central Australia. Stephan Elliott, the writer-director, has one original idea—posing creatures of the night in wild sunbaked settings. As crossover drag sagas go, it's neither as robustly funny as "La Cage aux Folles" nor as lively and poetic as the best parts of "Outrageous!"—M.S. (19th Street East 6, New York Twin, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Advocate—A black comedy set in medieval France. With Colin Firth as an idealistic lawyer and Amina Annabi as the owner of a homicidal pig. Also with Nicol Williamson and Lysette Anthony. Written and directed by Leslie Megahey. (57th St. Playhouse.)

Barcelona—The second film by the writer and director Whit Stillman ("Metropolitan") is a culture-clash comedy about a pair of conservative young Americans (played by Taylor Nichols and Chris Eigeman) in early-eighties Barcelona. Although the picture begins promisingly, its charm peters out fast. Every scene seems to make the same not very interesting point: that Americans get a bum rap from foreigners. Stillman's style is placid and a little smug—prematurely gray. In just two movies he has found the sort of rut that most filmmakers take decades to settle into. Also with Tushka Bergen and Mira Sorvino.—T.R. (8/15/94) (Eastside Playhouse, Quad Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinema.)

Bosna!—Bernard-Henri Levy and Alain Ferrari directed this documentary about wartime Sarajevo and the events leading to the recent carnage. In French. (Film Forum.)

The Browning Version—Albert Finney stars in Mike Figgis's adaptation of the 1948 play and the 1951 film script, both by Terence Rattigan. With Greta Scacchi, Matthew Modine, Ben Silverstone, Julian Sands, and Michael Gambon. Written by Ronald Harwood. (Paris.)

Café au Lait—The début feature from Mathieu Kassovitz, a young French director trying very hard not to be the Jewish Spike Lee, and only just succeeding. Kassovitz plays Félix, an annoying young bike messenger smitten by a dreamy young heroine (Julie Mauduech) who refuses to confine her charms to a single man. Félix has a rival for her affections, a wealthy black student (Hubert Kounde); after a raucous and unconvincing start, the movie settles down nicely into a good-natured love triangle. In French.—A.L. (9/12/94) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Caro Diario—Filming favorite sights while riding down the road with rock music blaring is a common baby-boomer fantasy; the Italian writer-director-star Nanni Moretti makes the mistake of actually indulging it in the first section ("On My Vespa") of this three-part comic diary movie. The second part ("Islands"), a picturesque putdown of provincial and eccentric offshore life, generates a woeful running gag about an intellectual TV addict. Only the third entry ("Doctors") gets some real black humor going, with an account of dermatological misdiagnosis that will give nightmares to anyone the least bit itchy. In Italian.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Clear and Present Danger—Further adventures of Jack Ryan (Harrison Ford), the courageous and incorruptible C.I.A. analyst who is the hero of Tom Clancy's ungainly novels. The director, Phillip Noyce, whose "Patriot Games" (1992) was a surprisingly elegant Clancy adaptation, has once again taken a tub of prose and sweated it into a sleek, classically proportioned suspense picture. Also with Henry Czerny, Willem Dafoe, Donald Moffat, James Earl Jones, and Anne Archer.—T.R. (8/15/94) (Village East Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Cinema 3.)

Eat Drink Man Woman—Another film comedy from Ang Lee, the director of "The Wedding Banquet." The aging Mr. Chu (Sihung Lung) is a widowed chef, living in Taipei with his three daughters, each of whom is getting itchy for the world beyond. (Watch out for the exquisite Chien-Lien Wu as Jia-Chien, the pushiest of the three.) Mr. Chu is a King Lear of the kitchen: a master on his own ground, slapping fish around and blowing air into a boiled duck, but gradually losing his sense of taste and his power to rule. The movie is more likable than memorable; you come out running for the nearest restaurant. In Mandarin.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center, Plaza, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Ed Wood—Tim Burton's biography of the filmmaker who inflicted "Plan 9 from Outer Space" and "Glen or Glenda" on fifties moviegoers tries to persuade us that its hero is a sort of holy fool of cinema. The picture is superbly shot, in black-and-white, by Stefan Czapsky, and most of the actors—Bill Murray, Sarah Jessica Parker, Jeffrey Jones, and Martin Landau (as Bela Lugosi)—are engaging. But there's a strong whiff of pointlessness to the whole enterprise. Wood (played by Johnny Depp) is depicted as a wide-eyed, boyish innocent, and he simply isn't interesting enough to hold our full attention for two hours.—T.R. (10/3/94) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Columbus Circle.)

Exit to Eden—Garry Marshall ("Pretty Woman") directed this comic version of Anne Rice's erotic novel, set on a resort island for sadomasochistic vacationers. With Dan Aykroyd, Rosie O'Donnell, Dana Delany, and Paul Mercurio. Written by Deborah Amelon and Bob Brunner. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Criterion Center.)

Forrest Gump—As all the world now knows, Tom Hanks plays Forrest Gump, a simple Alabama soul who serves his country without hurting a fly; he saves his comrades in Vietnam, woos the dippy Jenny (Robin Wright), and runs back and forth across the continent. Hanks does his best to convince us that Gump is, in fact, a character, and not merely a bulging sack of virtues, but the movie takes the fight out of him. With Sally Field and Gary Sinise. Directed by Robert Zemeckis.—A.L. (7/25/94) (Baronet, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Metro Cinema, and Embassy.)

Hoop Dreams—This engrossing documentary tells the stories of two inner-city Chicago teen-agers, William Gates and Arthur Agee, who aspire to careers in professional basketball. The movie introduces William and Arthur as fourteen-year-olds on the playground; they're being recruited by one of the city's perennial basketball powers, St. Joseph High School (the alma mater of Isiah Thomas). The filmmakers—Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert—follow them all the way through high school. In the course of the movie's patient, sympathetic narrative (the running time is close to three hours), our reaction to the heroes' progress changes decisively, and for the better: at first we're assessing their chances, measuring them for N.B.A. uniforms; by the end we're rooting for them simply to survive the process without losing all their exuberance and drive and creative spirit.—T.R. (10/17/94) (Orpheum VII, Film Forum, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

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I Don't Want to Talk About It—Luisina Brando plays a rich widow in a Latin-American village who refuses to acknowledge the vertically challenged condition of her dwarf daughter (Alejandra Podesta); Marcello Mastroianni is the dashing new man in town who improbably falls for and marries the girl. Even at a mere hundred and two minutes, this fable about the perils of denial feels drawn out. The erotic whimsy and small-town humor don't congeal, and the deus-ex-circus ending is an insult. It's a one-joke movie with a lousy punch line. Maria Luisa Bemberg directed and co-wrote the script with Jorge Goldenberg, based on a short story by Julio Llinàs. In Spanish.—M.S. (68th St. Playhouse and Quad Cinema.)

I Like It Like That—Family fights, romantic complications, and the hassles of life on 167th Street in the Bronx are the subject matter in Darnell Martin's début feature. (She also wrote the script.) With Lauren Vélez, Jon Seda, Rita Moreno, and Griffin Dunne. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Imaginary Crimes—Set in the fifties and sixties, it's a girl's answer to the recent string of con-man and son movies, with Harvey Keitel as a bogus Portland mine speculator and Fairuza Balk and Elisabeth Moss as his daughters. Anthony ("Zebrahead") Drazan's direction traps them under waxy buildup. The screenwriters, Kristine Johnson and Davia Nelson, smooth out Sheila Ballantyne's fragmented novel—they turn the reminiscences of Balk's character, an aspiring writer, into fledgling short stories. Keitel is welcomely restrained, and Balk has emotional "stuff" the way an untrained athlete has physical "stuff." Kelly Lynch, who appears briefly as Balk's mother, gives the subtlest performance—a daringly stylized portrayal of disappointment.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Opening October 21, Warren Beatty and Annette Bening in "Love Affair."

Jason's Lyric—In Doug McHenry's ersatz poetic tale of romance and death in Houston's inner city, Jason (Allen Payne) is the hero and Lyric is the name of his lover (Jada Pinkett). Jason and Lyric both have family problems. Jason's dad, Maddog (Forest Whitaker), seen in flashback, was a volatile Vietnam vet. His alcoholic brother, Joshua (Bokeem Woodbine), joins some aspiring bank robbers—who happen to be led by Alonzo (Treach), Lyric's brother. The held-back revelation of who killed Maddog makes for the worst kind of trick Freudian melodrama. Screenplay by Bobby Smith, Jr.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, and Astor Plaza.)

Little Giants—When super-jock Ed O'Neill ("Married . . . with Children") becomes the coach of a kids' football team and gets rid of the weaker players, his brother (Rick Moranis) takes all the rejects and assembles a rival team. Directed by Duwayne Dunham. (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Love After Love—Isabelle Huppert stars in Diane Kurys' film about a novelist whose love life provides material for her fiction. With Bernard Giraudeau and Hippolyte Girardot. Kurys wrote the screenplay with Antoine Lacomblez. In French. (Quad Cinema.)

Natural Born Killers—"Bonnie and Clyde" in a blender. Oliver Stone uses fractured, blindingly fast editing to depict the warped consciousness of Mickey (Woody Harrelson) and Mallory (Juliette Lewis), a pair of young sociopaths in love. They're familiar types, and Stone's "ideas" about American violence turn out to be the same glib received notions that we've seen in countless other outlaw-couple movies. The oddest thing about this would-be satire is that, for all the gore and hysteria, the film doesn't feel particularly impassioned; it's a frivolous barrage.—T.R. (9/5/94) (23rd St. West Triplex and Olympia.)

The New Age—A wicked straight-faced satire of despair and false hope amongst the hip. The writer-director, Michael Tolkin (author of the book and film "The Player"), is an L.A. Antonioni with a sense of humor. He and his sensor-sharp cast (Judy Davis, Peter Weller, Adam West, Patrick Bauchau, Patricia Heaton) nail a deadly portrait of shallowness and self-absorption—and make it deadly funny. Davis and Weller are unhappy marrieds who seek advice from New Age guru Bauchau and open a chic clothing store called Hipocracy. Tolkin captures all the anxieties about fashion and fulfillment that spread through L.A. smog and infect on contact.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Tower East; through Oct. 20.)

Only You—Norman Jewison directed and Marisa Tomei stars in a romantic comedy about a young woman who abandons her fiancé and flies to Italy in search of her true love, whose name she discovered during a session with a Ouija board. With Robert Downey, Jr. Written by Diane Drake. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Princess Caraboo—A historical drama, set in England in 1817, based on an actual incident. An exotic young woman (Phoebe Cates) who speaks an unknown language appears in a village and manages both to charm those she meets and to arouse their suspicions. Stephen Rea co-stars as a newspaperman. With Jim Broadbent, Wendy Hughes, Kevin Kline, and John Lithgow. Directed by Michael Austin, who collaborated with John Wells on the screenplay. (Gemini.)

Pulp Fiction—Everybody wants to work with Quentin Tarantino; for this bright and startling new picture, his first since "Reservoir Dogs," he mustered an amazing crew that includes Samuel L. Jackson, Uma Thurman, Tim Roth, Harvey Keitel, Christopher Walken, Bruce Willis, and—best of all—John Travolta. They parade through two and a half hours of complicated, cross-weaving Los Angeles plots, some of which are more gripping than others; the talk is dirty and funny, the violence always waiting just around the corner. Watching the result is like going to a long, loud party. The next day, it seems like a dream: the film attacks your senses and gives you almost nothing to remember it by, let alone to nourish you. It had to happen, and Tarantino is the man to deliver it: cinema as fast food.—A.L. (10/10/94) (Angelika Film Center, Murray Hill Cinemas, Beekman, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, and Embassy.)

Quiz Show—Robert Redford's movie is a speedy, absorbing chronicle of a trivial show-business scandal of the fifties: the rigging of big-money quiz shows. The screenplay, by Paul Attanasio, tries hard to sell some sweeping ideas about the class dynamics of American society, and doesn't quite succeed. The picture's real strength is its witty, vigorous evocation of the fifties media world. It hums along like a well-constructed farce, and its crazy momentum carries it over the bumps of social significance. Ralph Fiennes, John Turturro, and Rob Morrow have the largest roles, but they're outshone by the supporting players: Paul Scofield, Mira Sorvino, Christopher McDonald, Allan Rich, Hank Azaria, Barry Levinson, and—best of all—David Paymer.—T.R. (9/19/94) (Village Theatre VII, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

The River Wild—A family led by plucky supermom Meryl Streep goes on a white-water-rafting vacation out West and gets a hairier trip than it bargained for when the raft is hijacked by a pair of desperate crooks. The audience, however, gets precisely what *it* bargained for: safe, predictable thrills, with a light spray of dysfunctional-family drama. Curtis Hanson's direction is expert, but the screenplay, by Denis O'Neill, is so formulaic that the picture is never more than moderately exciting; you can see around every bend in this river. Also with Kevin Bacon, David Strathairn, Joseph Mazzello, and John C. Reilly.—T.R. (34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency.)

The Scout—A baseball movie that comes down with multiple-personality disorder. The first and best act is a hard-nosed farce about a desperate scout (Albert Brooks). The second centers on his maladjusted discovery (Brendan Fraser), who, along with searing fastballs, pitches wobbly comedy-drama. The third supplies an abrupt "Rocky" finish. The director, Michael Ritchie, promises confrontations between Brooks and Fraser's shrink that never happen—a big letdown, since Fraser's shrink is Dianne Wiest. The funniest moments are barbed interactions between Brooks and real-life baseball figures, such as Bret Saberhagen and George Steinbrenner. The script, credited to Andrew Bergman, Brooks, and Monica Johnson, bears virtually no resemblance to the source material: Roger Angell's 1976 *New Yorker* article "Scout."—M.S. (Gotham Cinema; through Oct. 20.)

The Shawshank Redemption—Tim Robbins returns to his best form with his haunted, cunning portrayal of Andy Dufresne, a young banker sentenced to life imprisonment in the nineteen-forties. Frank Darabont's movie never grabs at you, preferring to work patiently on your sympathies and nerves while finding time for casual jokes. What at first seems like a plotless tale of companionship—principally between Andy and a fixer named Red (Morgan Freeman)—tightens into excitement. The picture stays on track and leaves you, appropriately enough, with a surging sense of release.—A.L. (9/26/94) (Village Theatre VII, Coronet, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

The Specialist—Cheesecake meets beefcake as Sharon Stone persuades an ex-C.I.A. explosives ace (Sylvester Stallone) to wreak vengeance on Miami mobsters. Stallone's arch-enemy (James Woods, of course) heads security for these Cuban bad guys (led by Eric Roberts and Rod Steiger). The one deposit this movie makes in the memory bank is a sequence that defines big-star narcissism—a calendar-art montage of Stallone

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

exercising in his hideout while Stone, in her own digs, loiters in lingerie. The director, Luis Llosa, muffs the splashiest set piece (Stallone blowing away a portion of the Fontainbleau), and the screenwriter, Alexandra Seros, gives every character a wit impediment. Steiger's accent prompts nervous laughter: "You bastard!" comes out "Jew bastard!"—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Terminal Velocity—In this dumb-jock extravaganza, a daredevil skydiver (Charlie Sheen) hooks up with a mysterious beauty (Nastassja Kinski) to preserve the stability of the New Russia and thus the Free World. Sheen's "Hot Shots!" and "Major League" facetiousness invades his thriller persona; he shoots himself in the foot every time he opens his mouth. His character's nickname is Ditch, which leaves the radiant Kinski in the awful position of sobbing "Ditch . . . Ditch" at the climax. The skydiving scenes have several cool gimmicks. Deran Sarafian directed.—M.S. (Cinema II.)

Timecop—The come-on: Jean-Claude Van Damme's emergence as a superstar. The plot: In 2004, a time-travel enforcement agent (Van Damme) discovers that a senator (Ron Silver) has been looting the past to buy the Presidency. The reality: Van Damme and the movie are stiffs. Peter Hyams directed and photographed; script by Mark Verheiden.—M.S. (34th St. East, 59th Street East Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Totally F*ed Up**—Gregg Araki ("The Living End") wrote and directed this rowdy comedy about the joys and travails of being a gay teen-ager in Los Angeles. (Quad Cinema.)

True Lies—James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger join forces for their first outing since "Terminator 2," and it's a bumpy ride. Schwarzenegger stumbles into James Bond territory as a suave international spy named Harry Tasker; it's a stiff and rather sad sight. The middle chunk of the film defies belief—not with special effects, unfortunately, but with humdrum misogyny. Harry suspects his wife (Jamie Lee Curtis) of adultery, kidnaps her, and subjects her to a series of humiliations, apparently in an effort to win back her love. Yeah, right. Tom Arnold saves the show as Harry's sidekick.—A.L. (7/25/94) (Olympia.)

Wes Craven's New Nightmare—The filming of a sequel to the "Nightmare on Elm Street" series becomes a horrifying experience for one of the stars, played by Heather Langenkamp. With Robert Englund, John Saxon, and Miko Hughes. Written and directed by Wes Craven. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, and Criterion Center.)

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the film-library listings following these notes.)

Broken Lullaby (1932)—Ernst Lubitsch, the master of light and frivolous film art, seems to be doing penance for his own wit in this pacifist drama, adapted from a play by Maurice Rostand. Phillips Holmes, unspeakably handsome but an even more unspeakable actor, is the sickly, sensitive French musician who kills a German soldier (also a musician . . .) in the trenches. Remorseful, he goes to Germany and settles in with the dead man's family (Lionel Barrymore is the father) and fiancée (Nancy Carroll, miserably miscast, with a fat braid around her head). Lubitsch can't entirely escape his own talent, and the film is beautifully crafted, but he mistook drab, sentimental hokum for ironic, poetic tragedy. The picture was a box-office fiasco, despite the excessive praise of Robert E. Sherwood, who said, "It is the best talking picture that has yet been seen and heard." Not by a long shot. With ZaSu Pitts, Lucien Littlefield, and Emma Dunn. Adapted by Ernest Vajda and Samson Raphaelson; art direction by Hans Dreier.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Oct. 23-24.)

Diabolique (1955)—The setting is a French provincial school for boys; the headmaster's wife (Vera Clouzot) and mistress (Simone Signoret) conspire to murder him. It sounds simple, but the characters seem fearfully knowing, and there are undertones of strange, tainted pleasures and punishments. According to the director, Henri-Georges Clouzot, "I sought only to amuse myself and the little child who sleeps in all our hearts—the child who hides her head under the bedcovers and begs, 'Daddy, Daddy, frighten me.' " Clouzot does it, all right; his Grand Guignol

THEATRE ADDRESSES

EAST SIDE

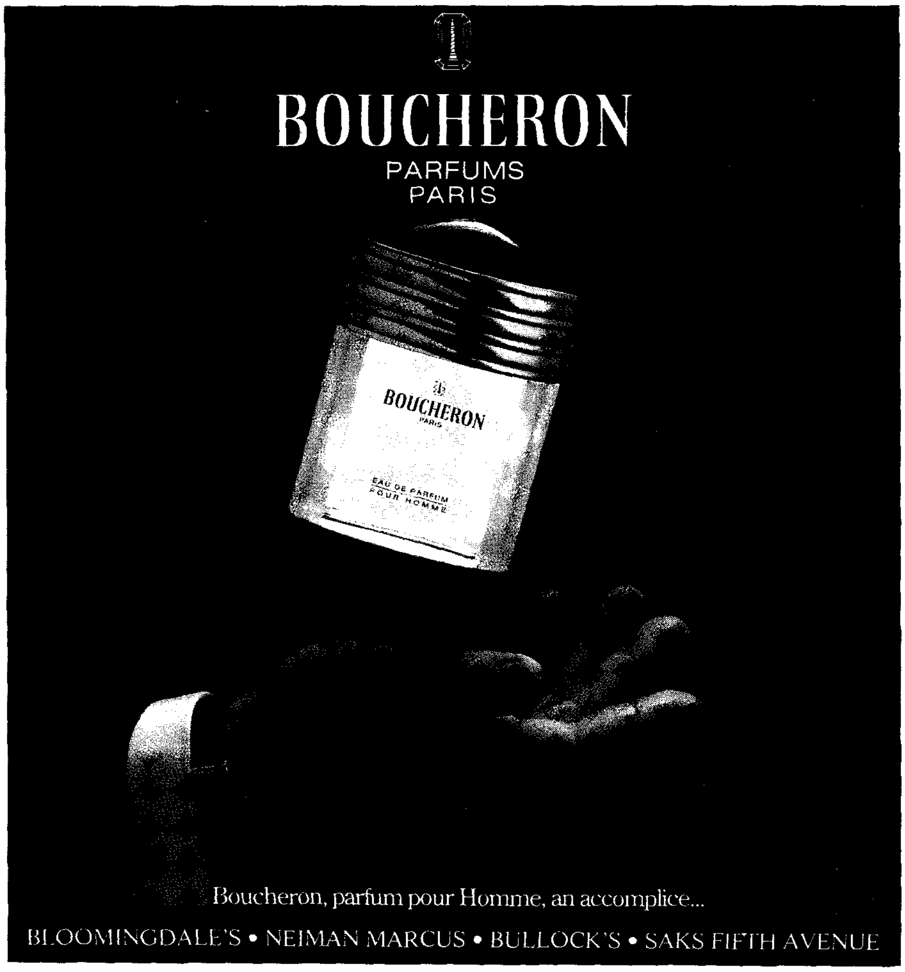
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
Plaza, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
Guild, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th (581-7360).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
Paris, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st (247-5070).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
Regency, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
Embassy 1, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
National Twin, B'way at 44th (869-0950).



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techniques are so calculatedly grisly that they seem silly, yet they succeed in making one feel queasy and sordid and scared. (Some people may feel too queasy to find the film really pleasurable.) With Paul Meurisse as the malignant headmaster, and Charles Vanel, Noel Roquevert, and Michel Serrault. From a novel by Boileau and Narcejac. In French.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; starting Oct. 21.)

Lucky Luciano (1973)—Francesco Rosi's brilliantly staged and photographed portrait of the Mob boss, played with brass-knuckles ingratiation by Gian-Maria Volonte. It's a peculiar political bio-pic. By casting Luciano's real-life nemesis—narcotics agent Charles Siragusa—as *himself*, Rosi hits on a docu-Brecht technique. The linchpin scenes dramatize Mob-government collusion that amounts to Mafiagate (both here and in Italy). In between come Siragusa's bouts of edifying speechifying—and his non-pro acting makes them oddly persuasive. With Rod Steiger, Charles Cioffi, Edmond O'Brien, and Vincent Gardenia. Rosi wrote the script with Lino Jannuzzi and Tonino Guerra. Cinematography by Pasqualino De Santis; music by Piero Piccioni.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 25.)

More Than a Miracle (1967)—Francesco Rosi's romantic fairy-tale fantasy starring Sophia Loren and Omar Sharif has some of the magical silliness and sweetness of De Sica's "Miracle in Milan" and the Alexander Korda production of "The Thief of Bagdad." It's set in seventeenth-century Southern Italy (dominated by the Spanish), where a prince (Sharif), refusing to marry one of the seven eligible princesses, goes forth on his white stallion and finds a lusciously ripe peasant girl (Loren). This splashy and beautiful comic tale is set in forests and yellow fields and at locations that include the fourteenth-century monastery of San Lorenzo at Padula, the fifteenth-century town of Bracciano, and the ruins of the fourth-century Circus of Maxentius. With Dolores Del Rio as Sharif's mother, Georges Wilson as the palace chef, and Leslie French as the flying monk, Brother Joseph. An Italian-French co-production, released here in English; the dubbing is often both funny and charming, especially when the warty old witches speak in voices that seem to come from another planet. (Some of them were actually Italian peasant men dressed as women, and some were elderly English actresses.) Written by Rosi, Tonino Guerra, and others, based on a story by Guerra; cinematography by Pasqualino De Santis.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Oct. 21, 23, and 25.)

Zazie dans le Métro (1960)—Movies are said to be an international language, but sometimes a film that is popular in one country finds only a small audience in another. This anarchistic, impudent comedy (from Raymond Queneau's novel), a great success in France in 1960, was hardly heard of in the United States. The film, which is like a Mack Sennett two-reeler running wild, seemed to be peculiarly disturbing for American critics and audiences alike. To Americans, "Zazie" seemed to go too far—to be almost demonic in its inventiveness, like a joke that gets so complicated you can't time your laughs comfortably. The editing, which is very fast, may be too clever; some critics have suggested that for Americans this comedy sets off some kind of freakish, fantastic anxiety. Putting it as squarely as possible, Bosley Crowther wrote in the New York *Times*, "There is something not quite innocent or healthy about this film." Yet it's like "Alice in Wonderland": Zazie (Catherine Demongeot) is a foul-mouthed little cynic, age eleven, who comes to Paris for a weekend with her uncle (Philippe Noiret), a female impersonator, and nobody and nothing are quite what they seem. Louis Malle, who directed, includes satirical allusions to "La Dolce Vita" and other films, and a parody of his own "The Lovers." Many of the modern styles in film editing, which were generally thought to derive from Alain Resnais or Richard Lester, have an earlier source in Zazie. In French.—P.K. (Symphony Space; Oct. 25.)

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through Oct. 20: "The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir" (1969, Renoir; in French), with Jeanne Moreau, Françoise Arnoul, and Fernand Sardou; and "Jean Renoir, The Boss" (1967, Jacques Rivette and André S. Labarthe).... ¶ From Oct. 21: "Diabolique" (†).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-1717)—Through Oct. 20: The final days in a retrospective program of films by Nanni Moretti, all in Italian—"Bianca" (1985), "Palombella Rossa" (1989), and "Sogni D'Oro" (1981).... ¶ "Spanish Eyes III: Classics from the Spanish Cinema, 1960-75." Oct. 21-23: "Placido" (1961, Luis García Berlanga) and "El Extraño Viaje" ("The Strange Journey"; 1961, Fernando Fernan Gomez).... Oct. 24: Theatre closed.... From Oct. 25: "Placido" and "La Prima Angelica" (Cousin Angelica"; 1973, Carlos Saura).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films from Hong Kong, all in Cantonese. Oct. 20 at 2:30 and Oct. 21 at 6: "Father and Son" (1981, Allen Fong), with Shek Lui and Lee Yu-tin.... Oct. 20 at 6 and Oct. 21 at 2:30: "C'est la Vie, Mon Cheri" (1993, Derek Yee), with Anita Yuen and Lau Ching-yun.... Oct. 20 at 8: "Bullet in the Head" (1990, John Woo), with Tony Leung, Jacky Cheung, and Waise Lee.... Oct. 21 at 8: "Gangs" (1988, Lawrence Ah Mon), with Ho Pui-tong, Wong Chung-chuen, and Ma Hin-ting.... Oct. 22 at 2:30: "Hong Kong 1941" (1984, Leong Po-chi), with Chow Yun-fat, Cecilia Yip, and Alex Man.... ¶ Oct. 20 at 3 and 6: "Home Across the Water" (1993, Benjamin Shapiro) and "None of the Above" (1993, Erika Surat Anderson).... ¶ Oct. 21 at 3 and 8: "Hymn to a Tired Man" (1968, Masaki Kobayashi; in Japanese).... ¶ Oct. 21 at 6: "Toru Takemitsu" (1994, Charlotte Zwerin).... ¶ A program of four films selected by director Warren Sonbert. Oct. 22 at 1:30 and Oct. 25 at 2: "The Cardinal" (1963, Otto Preminger), with Tom Tryon, John Huston, and Romy Schneider.... Oct. 22 at 5 and Oct. 25 at 6: "The Man with the Movie Camera" (1929, Dziga Vertov).... Oct. 23-24 at 3: "Broken Lullaby" (†).... Oct. 23 at 5: "Kiss Me, Stupid" (1964, Billy Wilder), with Dean Martin, Kim Novak, and Ray Walston.... ¶ A program of films directed by Jean Renoir. Oct. 22 at 5 and Oct. 24 at 2:30: "A Day in the Country" (1937, in French), with Jeanne Marken, Gabriello, and Sylvia Bataille; and a film of outtake scenes from "A Day in the Country."... Oct. 23 at 12:30 and Oct. 25 at 6: "The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir" (1969, in French), with Jeanne Moreau, Françoise Arnoul, and Fernand Sardou.... Oct. 23 at 2:30 and Oct. 24 at 6: "The Whirlpool of Fate" (1924, silent), with Catherine Hessling.... Oct. 23 at 5 and Oct. 25 at 2:30: "Nana" (1926, silent), with Hessling.... ¶ Oct. 24 at 6:30: A program of films by Paul Winkler, who will be present.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—A program of films directed by Francesco Rosi. Oct. 19 at 2, Oct. 20-21 at 4:15, and Oct. 22 at 6:30: "Just Another War" (1970), with Alain Cuny and Gian Maria Volonte.... Oct. 20 at 2, Oct. 21 at 6:30, and Oct. 22 at 8:30: "Moment of Truth" (1965), with Miguel Mateo Miguelin and Linda Christian.... Oct. 20 at 4:15: "The Swindler" (1959), with Alberto Sordi and Renator Salvatori.... Oct. 20 at 6:30, Oct. 21 at 2, Oct. 22 at 4:15, and Oct. 23 at 6:15: "Hands Over the City" (1963), with Rod Steiger.... Oct. 21 at 8:45, Oct. 23 at 4:15, and Oct. 25 at 4:30: "More Than a Miracle" (†).... Oct. 23 at 8:30 and Oct. 25 at 6:45: "The Mattei Affair" (1972), with Volonte.... Oct. 25 at 2: "Illustrious Corpses" (1976), with Lino Ventura, Cuny, Charles Vanel, and Max von Sydow.... Oct. 25 at 9:15: "Lucky Luciano" (†).... ¶ Oct. 22-23 at 2: "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1941, Victor Fleming), with Spencer Tracy, Lana Turner, and Ingrid Bergman.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Oct. 23 at 7: Tony Scott's "The Hunter" (1983), with Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Susan Sarandon, and Cliff De Young.

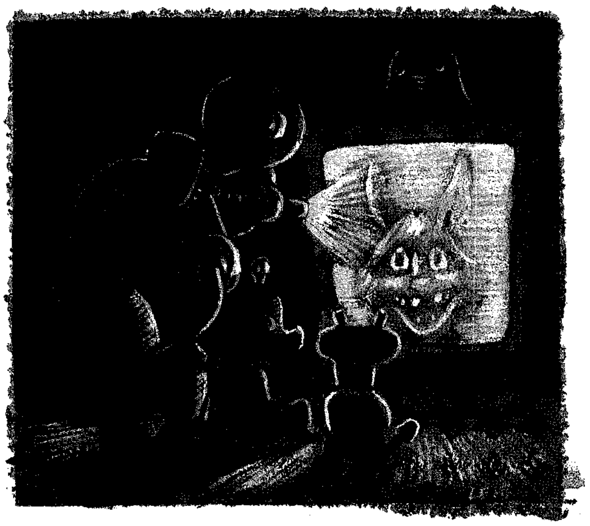
Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Oct. 23: "My Name Is Barbra" (1965), with Barbra Streisand.... From Oct. 25: "Color Me Barbra" (1966). (Showings Tuesdays through Sundays at 2.)... ¶ Through Nov. 27: A series of videos, changing each week, about Martha Graham and her dance works. (Showings Tuesdays through Sundays at 3:30.)... ¶ Through Nov. 20: Episodes of "Star Trek: The Next Generation." (Showings Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 2 and 4, Thursdays at 2, 4, and 6, Fridays at 2, 4, 5:45, and 7:30, and Saturdays and Sundays at 2 and 4.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadows Park. (1-718 592-9700)—Oct. 22 at 2: "New Orleans" (1947, Arthur Lubin), with Arturo de Cordova, Dorothy Patrick, Billie Holiday, and Louis Armstrong.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Oct. 25 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "White" (1994, Krzysztof Kieślowski; in Polish and French), with Zbigniew Zamachowski and Julie Delpy.

Symphony Space, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—Oct. 25 at 7: "Zazie dans le Métro" (†).... ¶ Oct. 25 at 8:45: "Remontons les Champs-Elysées" (1938, Sacha Guitry; in French), with Guitry.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Breaking Home Ties: Jewish Themes in Silent Cinema." Oct. 22 at 2: "His People" (1925, Edward Sloman; silent), with Rudolph Schildkraut and Rosie Rosanova.... Oct. 22 at 4: "Surrender" (1927, Sloman; silent), with Mary Philbin and Ivan Mosjukine.... Oct. 23 at 2: "East and West" (1923, Sidney M. Goldin and Ivan Abramson; silent), with Molly Picon.... Oct. 23 at 4:30: A program of short films by Edwin S. Porter, D. W. Griffith, Mack Sennett, and others.



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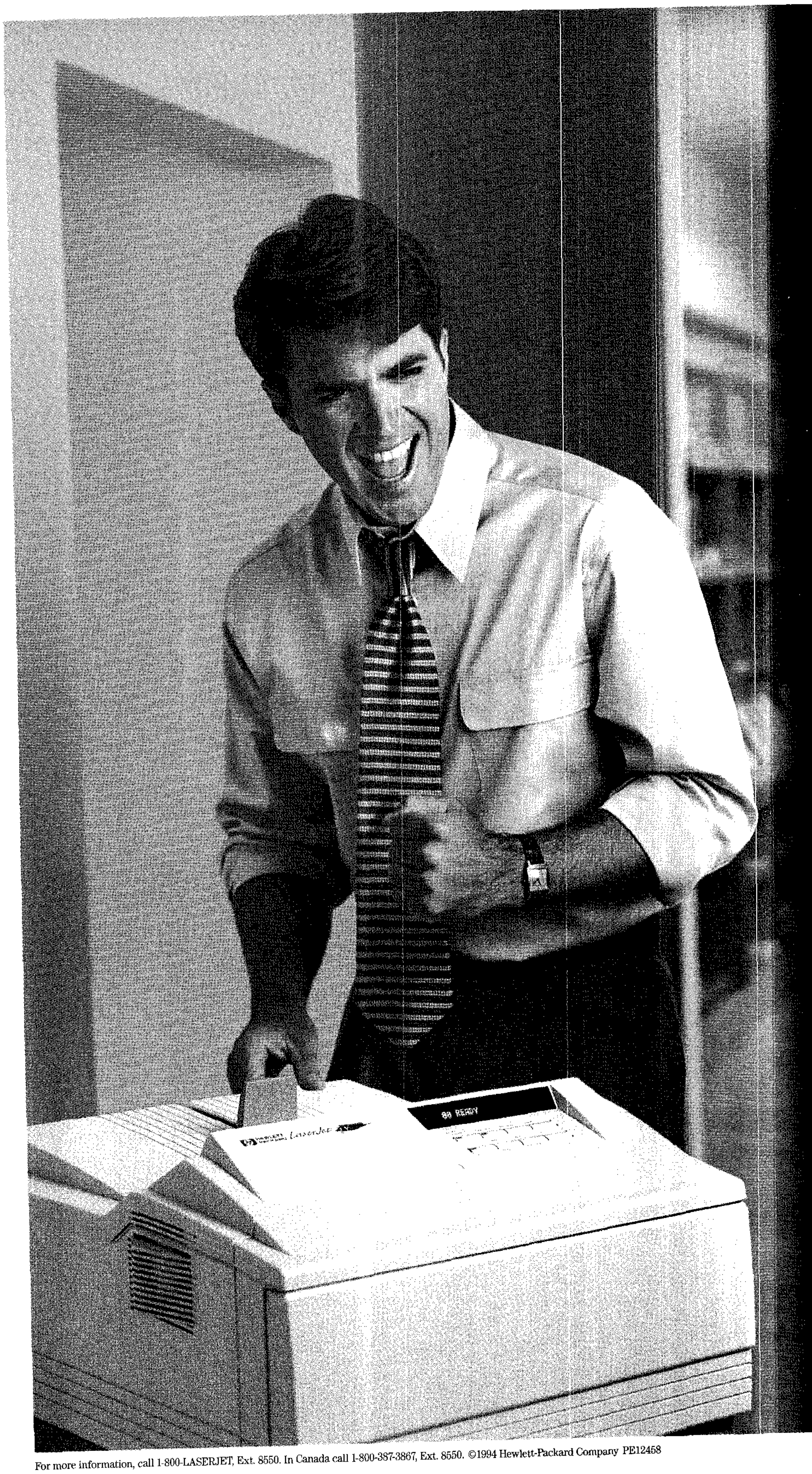

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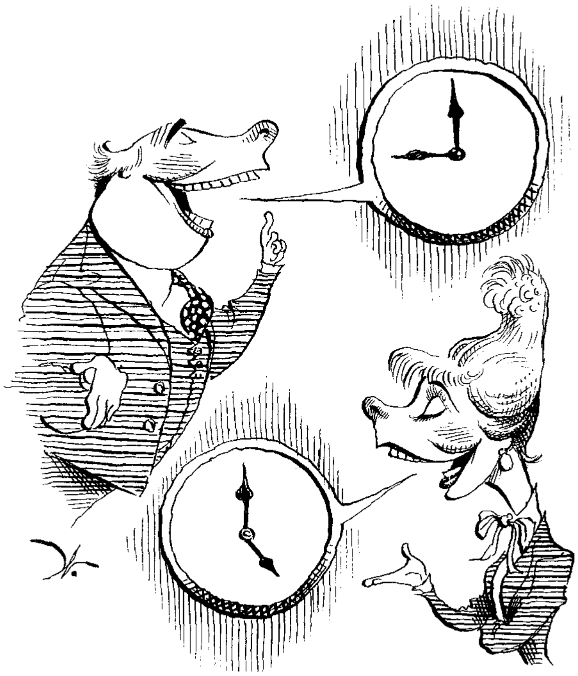
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

DOCTOR TANNEN'S NEW DIAGNOSIS

In the past four years, if you happened to have a conversation with someone that involved grumbling about the jerkiness or—if you were being nice about it—the opacity of the opposite sex, the conversation invariably came to a climax with one of you grabbing the other's arm and blurting, "There's this book you *have* to read!" The book, of course, was Deborah Tannen's "You Just Don't Understand," which was chock-full of such wildly understated truths as "Men and women often have very different ideas of what's important" and "Many men honestly do not know what women want, and women honestly do not know why men find what they want so hard to comprehend and deliver." The basic message was that women are *not* crazy and men are *not* jerks—they just have different conversational styles. This was not news, exactly, but the book became a best-seller, for it somehow satisfied a deep hunger in us to understand all the crazy, jerky people in our lives.

Dr. Tannen's latest book, "Talking from 9 to 5," has just been published, and it's only a matter of days or weeks before you'll be having a conversation about that jerk at the office who interrupts you in meetings and takes credit for work that *you* do, thank you very much, and someone will grab your arm and blurt, "There's this book you *have* to read!" Kicking off a six-week publicity tour at a bookstore in the Village a few nights ago, Dr. Tannen, who is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, said that on her book tour for "You Just Don't Understand" she was constantly asked about the way women and men who work together talk to each other, and that's what led to her current book. One thing she noticed when she was hanging around companies and listening in as people opened their mouths (and dug their own graves or blew their own horns) was that women tend to apologize compulsively, not because they think they've done anything wrong but to make other people feel good. "If you listen, you'll hear this over and over during the day—a woman taking a one-down position to save face for the other person." This strategy, she said, is often interpreted as a sign that the woman lacks confidence. "When I say this, a lot of people think I'm being critical and get angry at *me*."



There were about eighty people in the audience, and Dr. Tannen was happy to take questions. Her own conversational style seemed to be what she would call "high-involvement": she overlapped—to use the term that, she says in the new book, she prefers to "interrupted"—several people when they asked her questions, provoking a few I-guess-she's-only-human laughs in the audience. No advice was dispensed. "I don't tell people to change their style," Dr. Tannen said. A few minutes later, she said, "I don't tell people *not* to change their style." O.K., whatever—as we like to say in our office. In her book, Dr. Tannen says that there's no right way or wrong way to communicate. So she would have found it interesting but probably not alarming when, a few minutes before she began her talk, a young woman who had just sat down and started reading "Prozac Nation" turned to a young man next to her and said, "I don't mean to be friendly, but do you know what this reading is?"

EATING LUTÈCE

In a place as obsessed with the new as Manhattan, if you do the same thing in the same way in the same spot for a few decades, that's enough to qualify your establishment for the moral equivalent of landmark status. Lutèce, the classic French restaurant that André Surmain established in a town house on East Fiftieth Street in 1961, with André Soltner as his chef, answers that description. For several generations of diners, Lutèce has incarnated a kind of idealized Frenchness: charming, intimate, virtuosic—with never a touch of *froideur*.

Last week, Mr. Soltner, who had become the restaurant's sole owner, consummated a deal that sold majority ownership of Lutèce to a firm called Ark Restaurants. Among Ark's stable of around thirty establishments are two or three that people actually go to for the food; the rest are loud, bright, jolly places like America, a three-hundred-and-fifty-seat stadium in Manhattan that features a replica of the Statue of Liberty and a menu that runs to Fluffernutter. The president of Ark Restaurants, Michael Weinstein, is a businessman, not an epicure, and he serves a fairly dreadful cup of coffee. In years past, he says, he's been too busy monitoring his own restaurants—"to see that the context is consistent"—to eat with any frequency at places like Lutèce.

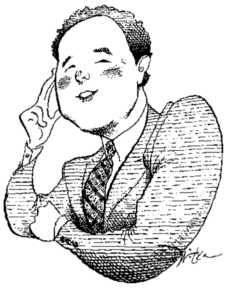
Mr. Weinstein understands that he has stumbled into a symbolic narrative, in which he plays the entrepreneurial vandal who lays waste the holy places, and he is at pains to point out that the story doesn't actually fit. He observes, among other things, that Mr. Soltner had been actively seeking a buyer; that Mr. Soltner will remain with the restaurant for the time being; and that Lutèce isn't in any sense broken and doesn't need fixing. Mr. Weinstein says that he may authorize "extrapolations" of Lutèce—satellite versions—but only if Mr. Soltner approves and if they do not "diminish the dignity" of the original. "The restaurant," he says, almost pleadingly, "is not going to change." Mr. Weinstein looks down at his hands, which have been folding and unfolding two purple sugar packets. The coffee has cooled. The only other item on the table in his office is a glossy magazine called *Biz—Fast News for Smart Companies*.

NELL'S NOT OVER

EVERYONE loves Nell Campbell, and Nell knows it. If everyone doesn't love Nell, then Nell is confused. Tossing her hennaed bob, holding out her arms, perpetually puckering her lips, Nell wants to love you. In her native Australian tones, she says "Darling!" many times. She explains, "I love the word 'Darling!' It's a word that we use a great deal here in the theatre, because the theatre is love, as in 'Darling! I'm ready for my wardrobe fittings, love.' "

Nell knows what will fit her and what won't. At the moment, she feels that her role in Charles Busch's latest play, "You Should Be So Lucky," is a perfect fit, while being the proprietor of Nell's, her club on West Fourteenth Street (now in its ninth year), *has been* a perfect fit. "But it's been going on so long, I feel I should put the club through college," she says. Nell hasn't outlasted her time, which began in the mid-seventies, when she was in the original stage and film versions of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." Nell hasn't lost touch. Nell is aware of the enormous caprice of club habitués, who have pronounced Nell's "out" more than a hundred times. Nell has been on so many "in" and "out" lists, she's practically eternal.

CITY HALL MEETS HOLLYWOOD



KEN LIPPER would be the first to tell you that he's a lucky man. If he had merely founded Lipper & Company, an investment-banking firm that manages a portfolio of three billion dollars, then, as they would have said in his old Bronx neighborhood, *dayenu*—it would have been enough. But Lipper is also well on the way to being, as they say in his new neighborhood, a player. He is the producer, with Edward Pressman, of "City Hall," a Castle-Rock movie that began with Lipper's own script and is to start filming in New York next week. The director is Harold Becker, whose credits include "Sea of Love," and the stars—yes, there are stars—include Al Pacino and Bridget Fonda.

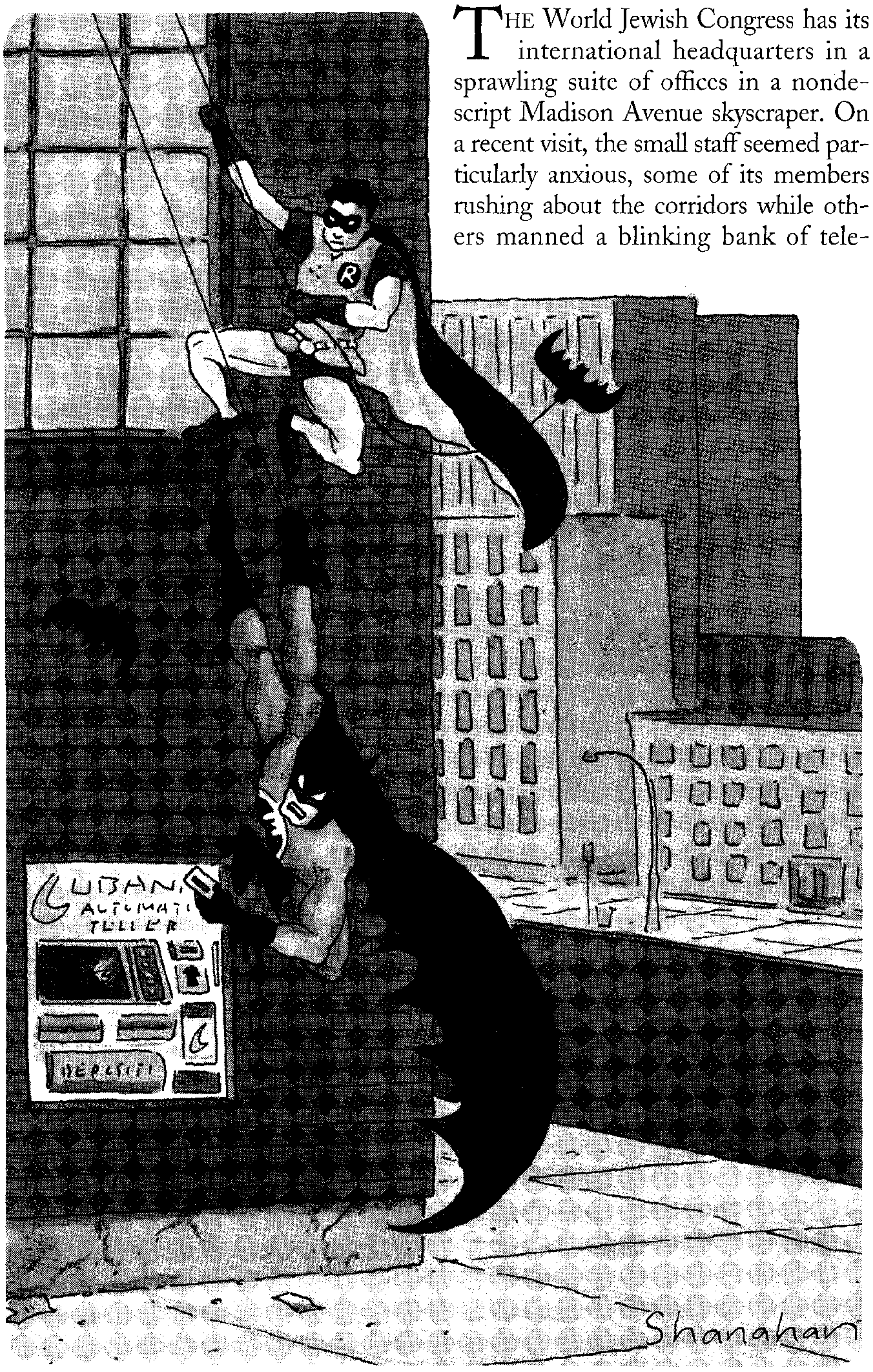
Lipper's path to Hollywood glory has some neo-Schwab's-drugstore elements to it. In 1986, out in the Israeli desert on an archeological dig, he found himself thinking he wanted to do something with writing. He had just spent three years on the end of a beeper as New York's Deputy Mayor for Finance and Economic Development; before that, he had put in enough years on Wall Street to become "financially stable," as he primly puts it. Before *that*—in junior high school, actually—he had written short stories. And now, thirty years later, the Muse was nudging him again. "I also thought, Wouldn't it be *great* to make a movie?" he says. When he returned home, he found that he'd had a call from Oliver Stone's people. "It was," he says, with the kind of grin you usually see on kids, "truly incredible."

STONE'S people had heard that Lipper knew his way around a trading floor, and they wanted to talk to him about their new project, "Wall Street." Soon enough, he was the technical adviser to the film. That big clock looming over the traders—that was his idea. Ditto the Chinese delivery boys. Maybe you don't recall the capitalist yahoo baying "If I'm right, eighths and quarters won't matter—buy Endicott!" but *that was Lipper himself. The whole* thing was like one long peak experience.

Lipper is a roundish man with a dome of tight curly hair—à la Itzhak Perlman—gray eyebrows, and a hectic flush. He's definitely a New York kind of guy: he's excitable—his hands wheel as he talks—and he doesn't exactly hide his light under a bushel. After he had come down from "Wall Street," he decided that he had a big New York story inside him—the drama of the world he had surveyed in his heady years as Ed Koch's deputy mayor. "The city is this incredible cauldron where the rubber hits the road," he said. "Thirty-billion-dollar budget, ordinary people administering it, the schools and red lights and subways and medical care. It's like the humus for a tragic movie."

Lipper's success must have something to do with his methodical and open-minded approach to new tasks ("I like getting into things," he says). He read books about power—"Memoirs of Hadrian," "Marat/Sade"; he studied an old literary guide laying out the thirty-six mother plots of all stories. Eventually, he discussed the project with Ed Pressman, the producer of "Wall Street," who agreed to develop his script with him. They commissioned new drafts from Nicholas Pileggi and Paul Schrader, but—Hollywood being Hollywood—the script was re-written once more by Bo Goldman, for whom Lipper professes the ungrudging admiration of the amateur for the pro.

The story in its current form involves a highly principled mayor of New York City, a moralistic and somewhat naïve deputy mayor, and a deal-making boss. The action is set in motion when a child in Harlem is killed in crossfire between a detective and a white drug dealer; the ensuing investigation, Lipper says, "takes you on a tour through how government works" and forces a series of painful compromises on the mayor. Lipper says he realized his theme while watching a performance of "Antigone": the conflict between conscience and duty. Happy or sad ending? Lipper heaved a sigh, paused, and finally said, "A *real* ending." Spoken like a budding player.



"Hold on—I was putting my card in upside down."

ANOTHER LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST

THE World Jewish Congress has its international headquarters in a sprawling suite of offices in a nondescript Madison Avenue skyscraper. On a recent visit, the small staff seemed particularly anxious, some of its members rushing about the corridors while others manned a blinking bank of telephones. "Sit down, just sit down," Elan Steinberg, the energetic executive director, whispered to a visitor as he covered the telephone receiver with his hand.

"I left a message for the Klarsfelds," announced his secretary, suddenly appearing at his office door.

"O.K., then get me Elie Wiesel," he said while gazing out enormous windows at neighboring office towers. "And check to see if the Justice Department knows about this." He turned to his guest almost as an afterthought. "Sorry, but I'm on hold with the Bundestag. I'll only be another moment."

The cause of the frantic activity was the news that the heirs of the German company J. A. Topf & Söhne, which built the crematoriums at the Nazi death camps, were pressing for restitution of their family's factory and villa and its surrounding parkland, in the town of Erfurt, all of which had been expropriated by the Communist government of the Soviet Occupied Zone after the war. Despite the passage of five decades, issues relating to Nazi war crimes still arise with some frequency at the World Jewish Congress. In the last few years, the W.J.C., led by Edgar Bronfman, Sr., chairman of the Seagram Company, has directed the bruising effort to expose Kurt Waldheim's Nazi past, pushed for the emigration of Soviet Jews when Communist governments weren't receptive, and convinced Steven Spielberg that he could not film "Schindler's List" at Auschwitz, since the entire site is a giant Jewish cemetery. The W.J.C. sees its main role as highlighting the moral dilemmas inherent in every Holocaust issue, and the case of Topf & Söhne seems to raise nearly all of them.

In late 1939, the S.S. had commissioned the company—which was run by two brothers, Ernst-Wolfgang and Ludwig Topf, and specialized in building crematoriums for civil use—to install crematoriums for the concentration-camp system. According to postwar testimony by senior Topf engineers, the Topfs had employees visit Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, and other camps throughout 1943 and 1944 to maintain and improve the crematoriums. The firm's engineers had developed a new top-of-the-line furnace, later dubbed the "Auschwitz model," which could burn between thirty and thirty-six bodies in ten hours. "It's perfect," a senior engineer wrote to his employers in 1942. “The oven burns one-third more corpses than I had originally predicted.”

TECHNICALITIES in the newest German restitution law—enacted shortly after reunification—do not allow the Topf descendants to reclaim their property, although they could be entitled to compensation for it. (The parkland is valued at more than two million dollars.) Dagmar Topf, Ernst-Wolfgang’s daughter-in-law, contends that in a constitutional state the heirs should not be “punished for the crimes of other members of their family.” Recently, speaking on the telephone from Glücksburg, she said that while all Germans bear “collective responsibility for the Nazi crimes, there is no collective guilt.” Explaining that she wants to regain the Topf property in part to atone for the brothers’ misdeeds, she talked almost wistfully about building a museum on the factory site. She hoped such a memorial would “teach German youth, since they are not sufficiently informed about the Holocaust and the history of the Third Reich.” At the same time, Mrs. Topf was eager to downplay the family’s wartime culpability. She contends that until 1943 the Topfs were unaware that their crematoriums were being used as part of mass extermination. It would have been a shock to Ernst-Wolfgang and Ludwig, she claimed, both of whom had joined the Nazi Party only “reluctantly,” in 1935.

Serge Klarsfeld, a Paris-based Nazi-hunter who has followed the case with great interest, says that the Topf heirs “are only requesting what the German law is permitting them to ask. They are not the same people from the nineteen-forties, but are the children, and of course money has importance for them. They are asking for what they believe are their rights, just like any citizen. But do they have the same rights with that family name, and with what that company did? That is a separate question. We do not think they have the moral right to ask for money, since money from the Topf brothers was earned with the ashes of Jews.”

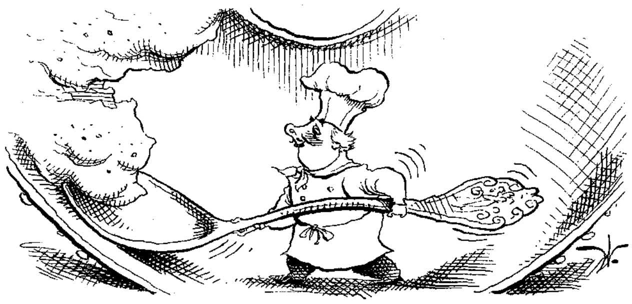
Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, agrees that the moral issue is the overriding one. “It is both grotesque and disturbing,” he says, choosing his words carefully. “Instead of trying to hide their connection with those who built the infamous Auschwitz ovens, the owners’ heirs insist on making it public. Is money more important than memory? Is it that all shame has vanished in some circles in Germany?”

The Topf family’s case has received remarkably little attention in Germany, especially considering that it’s an election year (national elections were held on October 16th). Chancellor Helmut Kohl depended on a conservative vote for his showing at the polls, so perhaps he dared not alienate those voters by suddenly championing the rights of Jewish victims over the interests of German business. To date, Kohl’s government has remained silent, and while the Democratic Socialist Party issued a statement calling any reparations to the Topfs “shameless,” the press largely ignored it.

Karl Saur, a journalist and former cultural editor at *Der Spiegel* and one of Germany’s leading media consultants, has seen only a single article about the Topf affair. “I would expect that if you asked Germans on the street about this issue, maybe one in a thousand would have heard about it,” Saur says. “It’s unfortunate, because we, the new German generation, while we are not guilty for what our ancestors did, do have a responsibility for their actions. But that is not a common viewpoint in Germany today.” Saur’s perspective is personal as well as professional: his father was a leading official in the Nazi armament ministry, and he has built a career that constantly confronts his family’s past. “But at the moment,” Saur concludes, with some resignation in his voice, “after reunification, all the forces say, ‘It’s been fifty years, so it must come to an end.’ Even a lot of politicians think like this.”

“It’s disgraceful,” Elan Steinberg fumed, in his office at the World Jewish Congress. “This is money that comes from the burned bodies of places like Auschwitz. It mocks the memory of millions of innocent victims. If the Germans will not block any restitution to the Topf heirs, then we will take legal action. We cannot allow this to happen. Anybody who knows us,” Steinberg warned, shielding his eyes from the sun with one hand while the other held the telephone, “won’t be surprised that the Topf issue has us mobilized.”

SEEN AROUND TOWN



“A BAGEL’S a normal thing,” Michael Arnaud, the morning manager of Fifty-Seven Fifty-Seven, a restaurant at the Four Seasons Hotel, said, “but we get a lot of people here who are into alternative dining, even in their bagels.” The tall, elegant Mr. Arnaud, who was standing next to a display of berries and cakes and a huge vase of lilies, was referring mainly to West Coast, waist-conscious guests who have begun ordering “scooped-out bagels”—bagels with their insides extracted and discarded. Orders have been averaging around five a day; among those who have been spotted enjoying a scooped-out bagel recently is the bantamweight Jeffrey Katzenberg. The staff will scoop out any bagel—plain, sesame, whole-wheat, poppy, cinnamon-raisin, or onion—but they won’t allow visitors into the kitchen to observe the procedure. So, out in the main dining room, Ralph Meyer, an auburn-haired waiter with wire-rimmed glasses, demonstrated the art of the scoop. “I hold the bagel firmly,” he said, clutching a butter dish in one hand and an imaginary teaspoon in the other. “It’s one motion,” he continued, nudging his wrist along the rim with evident skill. “Pieces of bagel fall out as you go along.” There’s no special training for scooping bagels at Fifty-Seven Fifty-Seven, Arnaud said. “When you’ve done it once, you know how to do it again.” The whole delicate operation takes less than a minute and is performed at no extra charge. ♦

This week’s contributors: Nancy Franklin, James Traub, J.T., Hilton Als, Gerald Posner, Elisha Cooper.

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

CLINTON'S ESCAPE CLAUSE

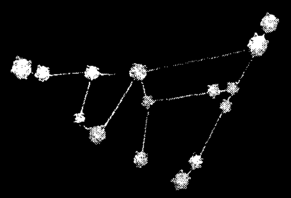
The apparent successes in Haiti and Iraq haven't changed the voters' to-hell-with-Clinton rage, so the Democrats are seizing Newt Gingrich's "Contract" as their last best chance.

BY MICHAEL KELLY

ON a bright, fat-pumpkin morning in late September, an odd little parade made its orderly way from the House Office Buildings onto the grounds of the Capitol and along the side of the building and the western steps to gather in neat ranks before twenty-three television cameras and a small crowd of reporters, Republican staffers, and incidental tourists. The assembled stood framed by bunting, but they would have made a patriotic tableau in any case, being almost entirely white, and dressed almost entirely in suits of blue (the men) and red (the few women). Over the years, the Capitol has seen many armies of protest: Coxey's, in 1894; the Kluxers of 1925; the Bonus Expeditionary Force of 1932; and the vast anti-Vietnam War demonstrations of the late sixties and early seventies. It had never seen anything like this. Traditionally, marching on Congress has been a privilege reserved for people who were not themselves members of Congress. After all, that has always been the point of the exercise: a march on Congress was an expression of anger by the citizenry outside the Beltway toward the crowd within—a public act of denunciation and exposure. This day represented the first time the insiders had marched to denounce and expose themselves.

If American life had not vaulted beyond parody some time back, the scene would have seemed a joke, of sorts: a hundred and fifty members of Congress and some two hundred people who would very much like to be members of Congress standing in front of the institution they served, or wished to serve, in order to rail against it, as if they were Free Silverites or Dust Bowl farmers come to smite the corruption of Washington. The day was lovely and the mood of the speakers was correspondingly lighthearted, but the scripted rhetoric was meant to sound angry and radical; each politician rose to declare the nation on the edge of disaster, Congress a disgrace, the President a fool, the people betrayed. The genial House Minority Leader, Robert Michel, who has dwelt comfortably in the belly of the beast for thirty-seven years, damned the "decades of neglect and mismanagement" in the House he helped run. The white-haired Henry Hyde, of Illinois, led the convocation in a prayer that the Capitol where he has worked for nineteen years "will once again be a place of honor and a temple of freedom." Dick Armey, of Texas, who, with Newt Gingrich, of Georgia, was a leader of the pack, declared the Congress in which he has served for nine years to be "corrupted by absolute power, a House of Representatives that now routinely stifles free and open debate, cobbles together thousands of pages of bills behind closed doors, and refuses to live by the laws it imposes on everyone else."

Citizen Gingrich took the final turn at the mike, and he was the angriest of all. Technically, Gingrich represents the Sixth District of Georgia, but really he is the representative of the permanent state of Madderthanhell—a state that in this election autumn has become the most powerful in the Union. Gingrich has been a congressman for fifteen years, but age has not withered, nor custom staled, his infinite capacity for outrage toward the Democratic majority. While Gingrich may occasionally allow himself the grace notes of "my honorable colleague" and "my learned friend," he makes no real pretense at collegiality. He is, in all apparent sincerity, at war. He wants the Democrats out, he wants their way of doing things finished. With the help of a growing number of fellow-believers—the most important being his Senate counterpart Phil Gramm, of Texas—Gingrich has reshaped the congressional Republican Party, an entity that was once strongly



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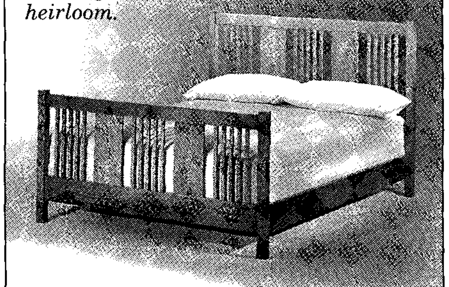

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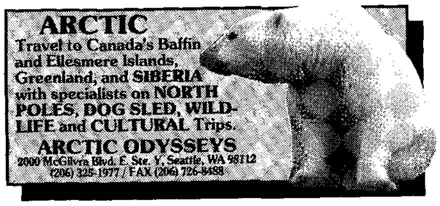

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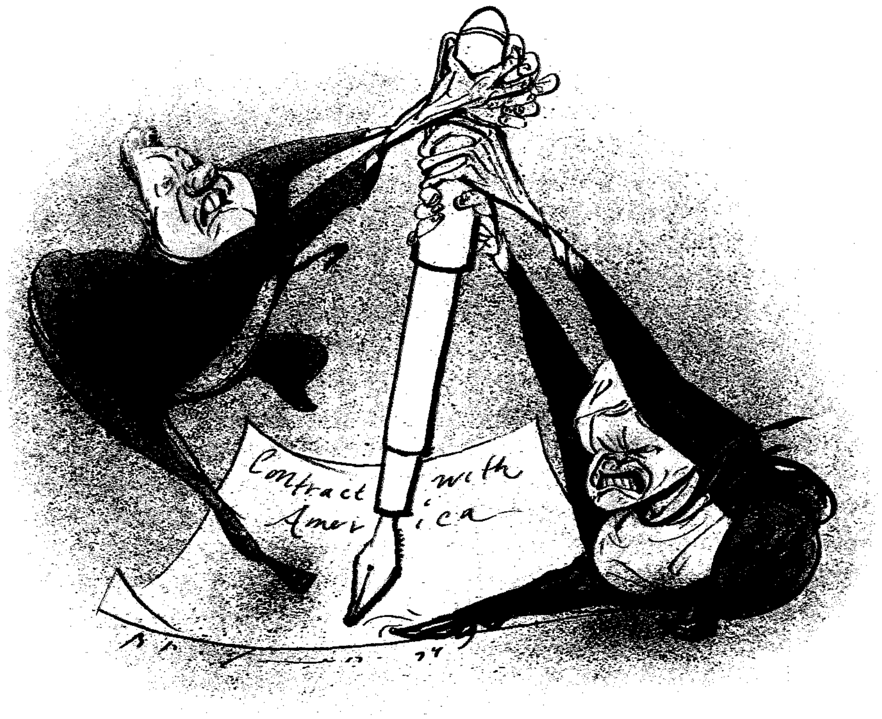
inclined to follow former House Speaker Sam Rayburn's advice about going along to get along, into a force for the advancement of a grand agenda: the destruction of Democratic policies and politicians, and the fulfillment of Ronald Reagan's promise to reverse the liberalization of America which began six decades ago.

Gingrich's speech was not clever or well written. In a shotgun marriage of Mario Cuomo's metaphor of the nation as family and Ross Perot's of the nation as automobile, he asked the audience to "think of America as a giant family of two hundred sixty million people of extraordinarily diverse backgrounds riding in a huge car down the highway trying to pursue happiness and seek the American dream"—an exercise that would make the Joads look like specialists in travelling light. Its unblinkered anger lent it a measure of force nevertheless. Gingrich is one of those men for whom anger appears to be the natural condition; he seems true to himself when his face reddens and his voice takes on a razored edge and he snipes, as he did on this day, at "the usual carping, the usual complaining, the usual negativism from an all too cynical Washington press corps," and chortles over the "collapse" of the Clinton Administration. The speech was also forceful because it painted the sort of apocalyptic picture that has an immense resonance these days. Gingrich proclaimed that "America is in trouble," and that, with "twelve-year-olds having babies, fifteen-year-olds killing each other, seventeen-year-olds dying of AIDS, and eighteen-year-olds getting diplomas they can't even read," we are facing "a crisis of our entire civilization." He warned that "if America fails, our children will live on a dark and bloody planet."



The Contract with America struck many in the beleaguered White House as something close to a gift from Heaven, delivered unto Bill Clinton by one of God's more unlikely handmaidens, Newt Gingrich.

STEVE BRODNER

What was needed to rescue the republic, Gingrich declared, was revolutionary change: the end of the forty-year Democratic control of Congress; the weakening of Congress itself (through constitutionally mandated term limits and spending controls); the utter rejection of Democratic policies as embodied by the Clinton Administration; and the passage of ten legislative proposals, most of them controversial and some apparently unconstitutional. The highlights: A Gingrichite 104th Congress would, on its first day, strike a series of blows against itself, including the cutting of House committee staff members by a third and the imposition of a three-fifths-majority requirement for the passage of any tax increase. In the course of the next ninety-nine days, the 104th would bring to the floor, among other measures, a radical welfare-reform act, a crime bill far more hard-nosed than the one passed this summer, constitutional amendments to mandate a balanced budget and to give the President a line-item veto, a bill limiting the terms of congressmen, and one cutting the capital-gains tax by fifty per cent.

Not one of these notions was new; some, such as the balanced-budget amendment, the term-limits requirement, and the capital-gains-tax cut were hoary to the point of permafrost. What was new, and was meant to be attractive, was the bright idea of collecting all the promises into a "Contract with America," an idea dreamed up by Armey, Gingrich, and the former Perotista pollster Frank Luntz, which all the assembled Republicans signed. In the G.O.P. flackery that accompanied the event, much was made of the supposedly binding nature of what the Republicans capitalize as the Contract. "A campaign promise is one thing, a signed Contract is quite another," one press release noted, and another said, "If we don't do what we say, throw us out. We mean it."

TWO weeks later: It was seven o'clock in the evening, at the end of another trying day in the life of Gene Sperling, quintessential Clintonian. Sperling is thirty-five years old, and, although he is a lawyer, not an economist, he is a deputy economic adviser to the President. Like most of the young men and women of the Clinton White House, Sperling is partisan to the bone: he has been working for liberal policy groups (the N.A.A.C.P., the Legal Defense Fund, and the National Abortion Rights Action League) and Democratic politicians (Michael Dukakis, Mario Cuomo, and Bill Clinton) since his Yale Law School days. He occupies an interesting niche at the intersection of policy and politics: a job that epitomizes the endless symbiosis—and confusion—between governing and selling that is the hallmark of the modern White House. Gene Sperling is a political numbers cruncher. One of the first policy aides to be hired by the Clinton campaign, he created the mathematical blueprint for "Putting People First," the economic agenda cum political pamphlet that provided the foundation of Clinton's pitch to the voters.

When, in 1993, the White House

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mobilized behind an economic plan that, as Bob Woodward has written in his book "The Agenda," neither the President nor his senior advisers fully supported, the political consultant Paul Begala wrote the script for selling the proposal to the public—a memo, headlined "Hallelujah! Change Is Coming," that said Clinton's plan would boost the economy "by finally paying down the deficit." Actually, the plan was designed to shrink the deficit for only a few years, after which it was projected to balloon once again. Details such as this were to be glossed over, Begala warned Administration officials in his memo. "Anytime you're asked about a specific in the economic plan, look for ways to bring it back to the general points that this is good for the country, and this is real change," Begala wrote, as his memo is quoted by Woodward. Gene Sperling provided the statistical muscle behind Begala's prose—what Woodward describes as "a spokesman's bible, a half-inch thick document of graphs, tables, pie charts, quotes, and lengthy arguments totalling 86 pages. [A] manual for all-out political war."

Sperling and the White House won that congressional budget battle, though by just one, reluctant vote. In the year since, however, the tide has gone heavily against the Administration, and the Clintonites have lost much of the cheerful blood lust that once energized them. Now, thanks to the Contract with America, Sperling was a happy warrior again. With his pin-striped suit coat draped over the back of his chair, he sat at the long wooden table in his West Wing basement office, his glasses off, and rubbed the bridge of his nose as he scratched hasty mathematical notations on the backs of documents he had prepared to refute the promises of Newtian law.

"Take a look at this," he said, jabbing his pen at an item in the Republicans' proposal. "Note the language here, where they talk about what spending cuts they would employ to achieve a balanced budget. It contains, for God's sake, a *double* caveat: 'Examples of possible cuts.' They're not saying these are cuts they are going to make, or even possible cuts; they are *examples* of possible cuts! Or take a look at their line where they talk about the cost of the balanced-budget amendment. This is maybe the best political line I have ever seen for sheer dishonesty: 'Balanced Budget Amendment/Line Item Veto—No Cost.' Or take a look at their line item for defense: 'Strengthening Defense—No Cost.' "

Scratch, scratch went the Sperling pen, burrowing deeper and deeper into the mysteries of political budgetry. "Why, just consider their proposal for back-loading Super I.R.A.s. Here, let me show you some numbers. You can see here, the back-loaded Super I.R.A. would cost the Treasury six billion dollars per year; it's designed to fool the budget window, designed to get a good federal-deficit number in the early years, while passing on the cost to the out years."

It is the media wisdom of the moment not to take the Contract with America seriously. But, as Sperling's urgency suggests, within the Clinton camp the Contract is taken with utmost seriousness, if not necessarily in the way its creators intended. The White House has seized upon the Republicans' gambit with loud cries of outrage and quiet sighs of relief. What Newt Gingrich proposed on September 27th on the steps of the Capitol is now being used by Bill Clinton and his political strategists in a last, desperate attempt to redefine the 1994 elections, and to rehabilitate the reputation of his Presidency. As a wholly unexpected result, these midterm contests have become, in their last month, what elections are supposed to be—a battle of ideas, a choice between two competing visions of the role of government in America.

To understand how this has happened, it helps to look back to where matters stood with Clinton and the Democrats on the morning Gingrich rolled out the Contract. That day, the President and his party were staring glumly at disaster. After years of trying, the Republican Party appeared to have finally reversed Tip's Law—to have made all politics national. In congressional and gubernatorial races across the country, Republican challengers were hammering Democratic incumbents. Men who had been in office so long that their desk chairs were form-fitted to their bottoms were falling, or threatening to fall, to challengers nobody in Washington had heard of before, it seemed, last Tuesday. The very foundation of the

O'Neill universe—the understanding that the ability of an incumbent to bring the bacon of Washington home to his district insures reëlection—seemed suddenly shaken. The voters in Tom Foley's district, infuriated by his lawsuit against a term-limits referendum, were, the polls indicated, seriously considering giving up the privilege of being represented by the Speaker of the House. In Massachusetts, Ted Kennedy had become the personification of Bloated Washington, heaving his besuited bulk from stump to stump, his face as fat and red as a Big Boy tomato, in the company of aides toting giant stage-prop checks that represented examples of his tax-dollar largesse to the folks back home; the senator of thirty-two years' standing was running barely ahead of the millionaire novice politician Mitt Romney. In New York, the three-term governor, Mario Cuomo, was threatened by the former mayor of Peekskill, George Pataki, and, in California, Senator Dianne Feinstein by the Stealth candidate Michael Huffington. In the Tennessee race for former Senator Al Gore's seat, the Democratic representative Jim Cooper was getting clobbered by Fred Thompson, a lawyer-lobbyist cum movie actor running as a populist in a pickup truck, while the incumbent senator Jim Sasser was facing a surprisingly tough challenge from William Frist, a rich Nashville surgeon who had been so little involved in politics that he hadn't registered to vote until 1988. In Oklahoma, Representative Mike Synar, after eight terms in the House, lost the Democratic primary to Virgil Cooper, a seventy-one-year-old retired schoolteacher who had spent less than seventeen thousand dollars on his campaign.

In these races, and in many others, almost every challenger was running on a platform directly in line with the Gingrich pitch. Frank Luntz, whose voter surveys and focus groups were instrumental in framing the Contract, calls it the "to hell with you" message: to hell with Congress, to hell with Washington, to hell with Big Brother government, to hell with taxes, to hell with the liberal élites, to hell with welfare mothers and street gangsters and bad schools and the mess of the cities.

"The editorial writers in Washington, they don't understand the mood out there," Luntz said. "They write the word

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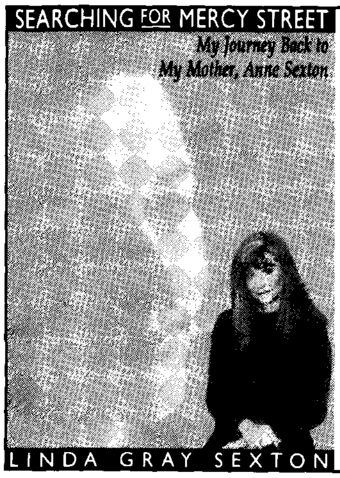
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'anger' as if it were a five-letter word. It's not. It's a four-letter word and a three-letter word—'Fuck you.' In all my focus groups, people are saying 'Fuck Washington.' They don't even bother to correct their language. There are different types of anger all around the country, all coming together against Washington. There is a conservative religious anger in the South, and that is quite different from the antifederalist Washington you find west of the Mississippi. The South is a moral anger, a moral indignation; the Western anger is: 'Get off my back.' The urban anger is gritty and blunt. All these things are evident, in one way or another, in various races. The Oliver North vote in Virginia is: 'To hell with the system. The system is evil. It has to be changed.' The Marion Barry vote in D.C. is: 'Screw the white establishment.' It's all the same phenomenon."

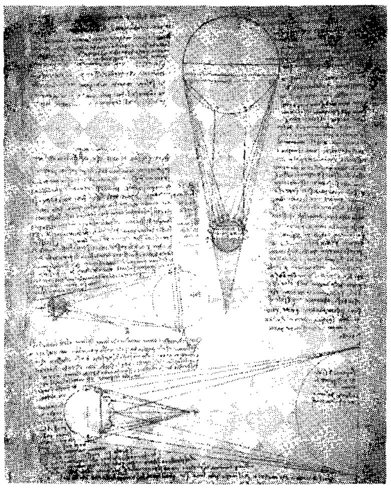
The anger against Washington, Luntz argues, is all-encompassing. "It's anger not just against the federal government but against congressmen, senators, journalists, even pollsters," he says. Still, the Democrats bear the brunt of it, because "people see in growing numbers that Democrats are the party of big government, so the way to vote against big government—against Washington—is to vote against Democrats."

As the White House and Democratic Party strategists were unhappily aware, Bill Clinton had come to personify for many voters what it was that had made them so angry about Washington in the first place. Two years earlier, Clinton had been elected by a bare plurality—forty-three per cent of the vote—in the first wave of the same anti-incumbent, anti-government fervor that now threatens him and his party. Catching that wave perfectly, Clinton had promised voters the sort of radical change they were demanding: to reform the financing of national politics, to run an Administration of spotless ethical character, to effectively address America's huge problems of crime and underclass pathology, to reject the special-interest politics with which his party had become identified, to end congressional gridlock, to "grow" the economy, to work toward balancing the federal budget, and to effect a national health-care plan offering universal coverage.

To a larger extent than it is usually given credit for by voters, the Administration had met its goals, boosting the economy with the passage of a deficit-reducing budget and the North American Free Trade Agreement and enacting an array of social reforms. It had also, however, committed large and frequent blunders, not only in its general failure to manage Congress but also in its particular failure to pass health-care, welfare-reform, or ethics legislation. Abandoning a promised middle-class tax cut, the Clintonites had imposed new taxes. In such matters as gays in the military, health care, and affirmative action, they had exhibited a remarkable insensitivity to the public dislike of federal efforts at social engineering. Clinton himself had come to be regarded with widespread animus, for both his personal and his governing style.

Finally, dismally, the promise of sweeping change petered out in the debacle of the 103rd Congress's closing months, in which weak Democratic support, strong Republican opposition, and chronic White House ineptitude had combined to kill health-care and political-financing reforms. When Congress went home two weeks ago, it left behind an exhausted, battered Administration. "I had a dream the other night," Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala told me. "Congressmen were running out the door, and Harold Ickes and I were holding onto their legs, trying to pull them back, saying 'Please, you can't leave until you pass some kind of first step on health care.' "

For all this Clinton reaped the blame; he became, fairly or not, the great white albatross of his party. "He is a victim of this feeling out there," Don Sweitzer, the political director for the Democratic National Committee, explained. "He has become the person you can point to for your anger over the state of things, because he is the President." A liberal Democratic representative, who predicts "more Democratic losses than people think in the House," was more direct. "Clinton has come to symbolize the people's mistrust of government," he said. "Many of them feel duped by him, and these are people who tend to be swing voters." To the dismay of Democratic candidates, the 1994 elections were shaping up as a referendum on what was wrong with government, as symbolized by the leader of the Democratic Party. "People are disgusted at government," said Tony Coelho, the former California



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congressman whom Clinton has made the de-facto Democratic national chairman, "because government misled them, and they feel very strongly about it, and what they sense is that Clinton has not delivered on change."

There did not seem much that the President and the national Democratic Party could do about all this. Clinton was so profoundly unpopular, particularly in Western and Southern states, that many Democratic candidates refused to be seen in public with him, and were running television commercials assuring voters that they, too, opposed the President's policies. For weeks, Clinton had been arguing privately that he should go on the offensive—that the White House should mount an aggressive campaign in defense of his record, pointing to legitimate achievements like the deficit-reducing 1994 budget, the Family Leave Act, the National Service Corps, and the 1994 crime bill as evidence that the Administration was living up to its grand campaign promise of change. But among the President's own advisers there was deep concern that a Clinton offensive would only serve to intensify the albatross effect.

"We had trouble," Coelho told me. "What was happening was that our people were trying to fight on a local basis, which is the way most off-year races are fought, and the Republicans were trying to elevate the election to a national anti-Clinton election and make all our candidates run as Clintonites, and they were trying to take it from the normal losses for the party in power in an off year to major losses. And they had convinced the press that this was indeed more than a normal off-year election, and the press was writing it, and the more the press wrote it, the more our Dems believed it. Our base was demoralized. Our members were frustrated and running scared, as opposed to aggressively defending. There was a psychology in place that we were having a hard time containing."

A senior White House strategist summed up the situation in similar terms: "The Republicans were blessed with a situation in which they had complete control of the field, they had the issues on their side, they owned the game. They were running candidates who did not have to stand for anything except not to be Bill Clinton. Every race was dominated by a negative discussion about us. We did not have anything going for us. We had nothing."

In this bleak environment, the Contract with America struck many in the White House as something close to a gift from Heaven, delivered unto Clinton and the Democratic Party by one of God's more unlikely handmaidens, the scowling Old Testament figure of Newt Gingrich.

"We are absolutely grateful for it," the senior Presidential adviser George Stephanopoulos told me. "It clearly shows what they are for and why they have been blocking things in Congress for the past couple of years. They are blocking things not just for the sake of blocking things but because they have different ideas, and if people look at their ideas they will realize they are bad. There is now a clear contrast in the 1994 race, and the President will be out there several days a week between now and Election Day drawing a clear contrast between the start he has made in getting Congress to

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work for ordinary people and the Republican alternative, which is taking us back to trickle-down economics and Reaganomics."

What the Contract with America did, White House strategists figured, was give Democratic candidates a chance to shift the conversation, at least slightly, away from the subject of Bill Clinton. "All of a sudden, Dems out there who had nothing to run on except defending Clinton—all of a sudden, they had something else to run on, and, in so doing, could get an audience to accentuate the positive side of the Administration's record," Coelho said. "If the Republicans hadn't done this, the whole conversation would still be the Republicans going anti-Clinton and us defending Clinton, which is not a winning conversation for us."

According to Coelho, the Democrats first learned of the Contract's broad outline in August. "We realized right away they were giving us a softball," Coelho said. "So we immediately went into gear and started coming up with the data on what this would mean." By September 20th, a week before the Contract was actually unveiled, Sperling's National Economic Council office had churned out a not-for-distribution "Preliminary Budget Analysis of House Republicans' *Contract with America*," a twenty-four-page argument setting forth the essential points of what would become the Democratic offensive: that the Contract represented a return to Reaganomics, with tax cuts for the wealthy at the expense of the middle class; that the Republicans' plan to balance the budget while simultaneously cutting taxes would necessitate a trillion dollars' worth of budget cuts over a five-year period; and that the only way the Republicans could achieve those savings would be to dramatically reduce Medicare or Social Security, or both, since these two huge entitlement programs make up fully half the projected budget for the fiscal year 2002.

"How long I've waited to see Meryl Streep float down a river on a raft!"

THE first unsubtle clue that Gingrich's gift was not going to be the salvation that the Democrats were hoping for came the first time the President took the offensive outside Washington. On October 11th, Clinton went to Dearborn, Michigan, to speak to a group of workers at a Ford Mustang plant. Standing in front of a giant Ford emblem, he derided the Republicans' proposal as "the Contract *on* America": "I hope the American people will have a simple answer to this contract. We've been there. We've seen that. We've tried it. And we will not be fooled again. No one would want to go back to the days when we exported jobs, not products. No one would want us to go back to the days when the deficit was exploding and our economy was going downhill. That is exactly the decision that all of you are going to have to make on November 8th: whether we keep going in the right direction or go back to the nineteen-eighties' trickle-down economics."

The event should have been a hit. The American auto industry is once again enjoying fat times, and the Dearborn plant is running at full tilt. The United Auto Workers had secured a paid morning off so that members could attend the President's speech. Before the speech, White House officials had told reporters to expect a crowd of four thousand. According to press reports, however, fewer than a thousand workers bothered to show up, and the *Times*' Michael Wines called their response to Clinton's words "lackluster." To make matters worse, the local Democratic candidates Clinton had come to Michigan ostensibly to help treated him like a leper. Representative Bob Carr, who was trailing the Republican candidate, Spencer Abraham, in the race for Michigan's open Senate seat, declined two opportunities to stand next to Clinton, and made a point of telling reporters, "I did not invite the President here." Lynn Rivers, the Democratic candidate for the congressional seat of Representative William D. Ford, a Democrat who is retiring, skipped a White House invitation to join the President at a gathering with union officials.

What made Dearborn a sign of catastrophe, rather than merely a humiliation,

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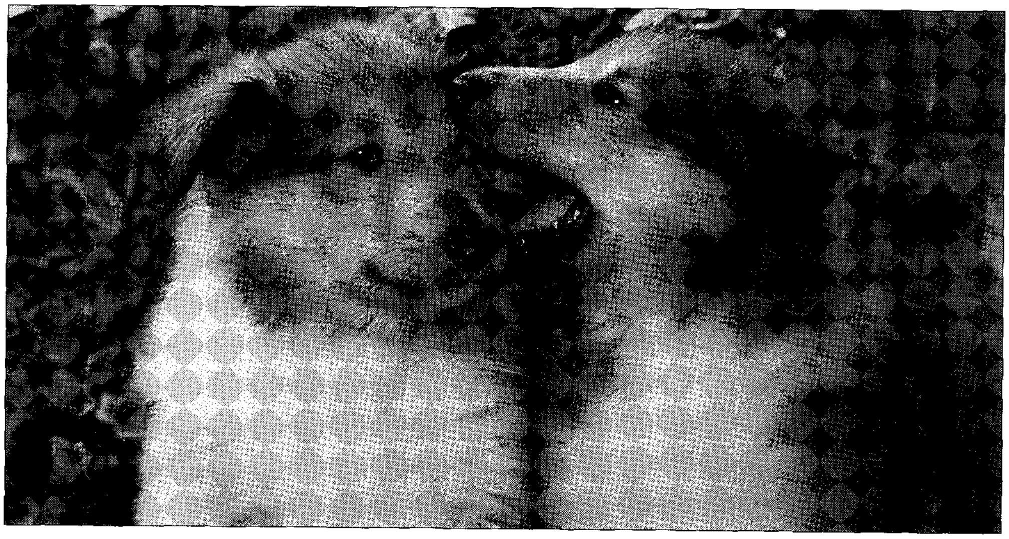

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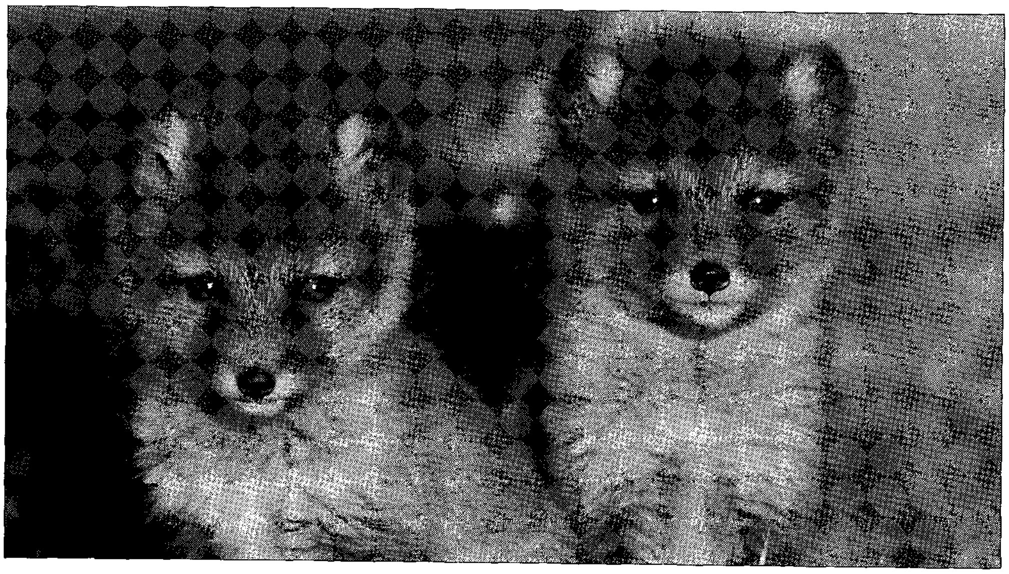

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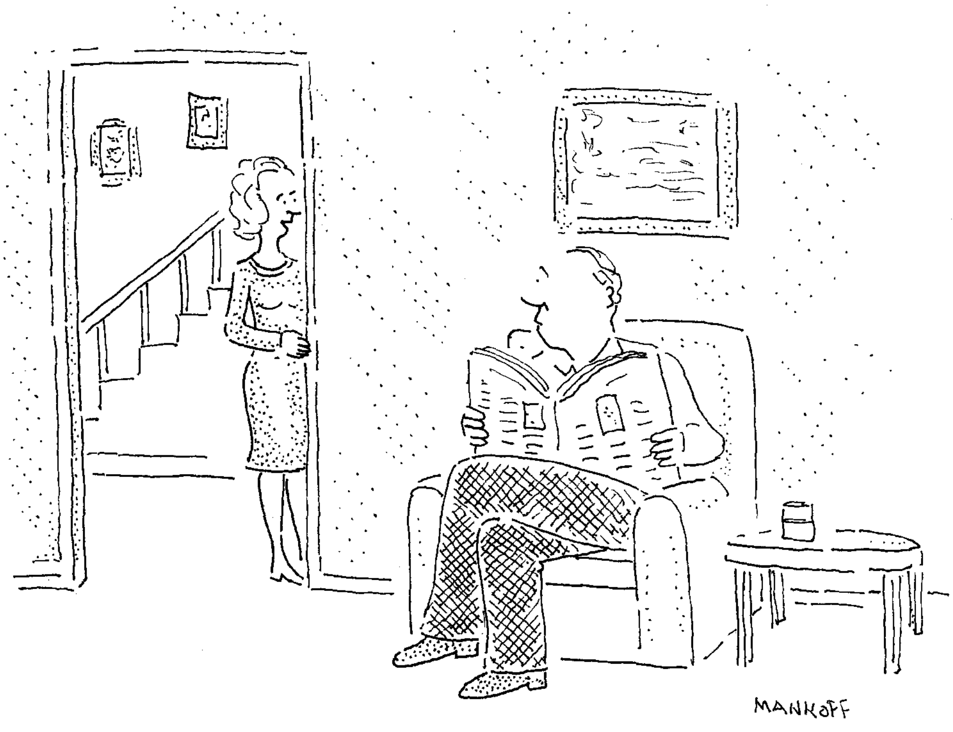

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was the fact that Michigan auto workers are exactly the sort of voters the Democrats are trying to reach with their last-ditch effort. Although White House officials like to talk about the Gingrich opening as an opportunity to galvanize great numbers of voters, it is doubtful whether many of them really believe that. The truth is that the entire Democratic campaign over the next few weeks—featuring more Presidential speeches, a blizzard of demagogic television commercials accusing the Republicans of secretly plotting to cut Medicare, and the reprise of Vice-President Gore's 1992 role as attack dog—is designed solely to scale back the scope of disaster, to arouse enough traditional Democratic voters, such as unionized factory workers, so that losses will be kept to a minimum on November 8th. "This whole thing is about motivating our base to cut our losses," Coelho told me. "For us to activate our base, this is exactly what we need. Our base understands Reaganomics totally. We'll remind them what it was like in the eighties."

But in attempting to recast the 1994 elections as Reaganism vs. Clintonism, as the eighties vs. the nineties, the Democrats may have seized their only chance to turn the conversation at least partly away from the subject of Clinton. But in so doing they have grasped a weapon that cuts against them as much as for them. "I hate to see us encourage people to start comparing how they feel about the Reagan era and the Clinton era," Al From, the director of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, one of whose founding fathers was Bill Clinton, told me. "That will give Democratic loyalists energy, but that's all." From sounded as if he were mystified by the White House political thinking. "They think people hate Ronald Reagan, but I don't think people do," he said. "People like him. And the people who buy the notion that you can't balance the budget and cut taxes at the same time are the forty-three per cent who voted for Bill Clinton in the first place."

One of the Democrats' top political strategists regards the President and his senior White House advisers as hopelessly self-deluded. "They don't see the true scope of it," he told me. "The President and his political people do not understand what has happened here. Not one of them ever comes out of that compound. They get in there at 7 A.M. and leave at 10 P.M., and never get out. They live in a cocoon, in their own private Disney World. They walk around the place, all pale and haggard, clutching their papers, running from meeting to meeting, and they don't have a clue what's going on out here. I mean, not a clue."

Both Stephanopoulos and Coelho told me they were sure that the Republican ideas, as outlined in the Contract with America, were unpopular with voters. Democratic pollsters had conducted extensive surveys and several focus groups on the subject, they said, and the answers always came back the same. "People don't want to go back to those economic policies," Stephanopoulos said. The result of the polls, he said, indicated strong disapproval of the Republicans' ideas. "It was not close," he said.

What Stephanopoulos did not mention was that the Democratic pollsters had framed key questions in ways bound to produce answers the President presumably wanted to hear. When the pollsters asked in simple, unadorned, neutral language about the essential ideas in the Republican agenda—lower taxes, a balanced budget, term limits, stronger defense, etc.—respondents approved in large numbers. "If we asked a question that said 'Do you support balancing the budget and giving a tax credit to people who have children?' people supported them overwhelmingly," explained Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster, who conducted surveys on Contract with America in five congressional districts around the country.

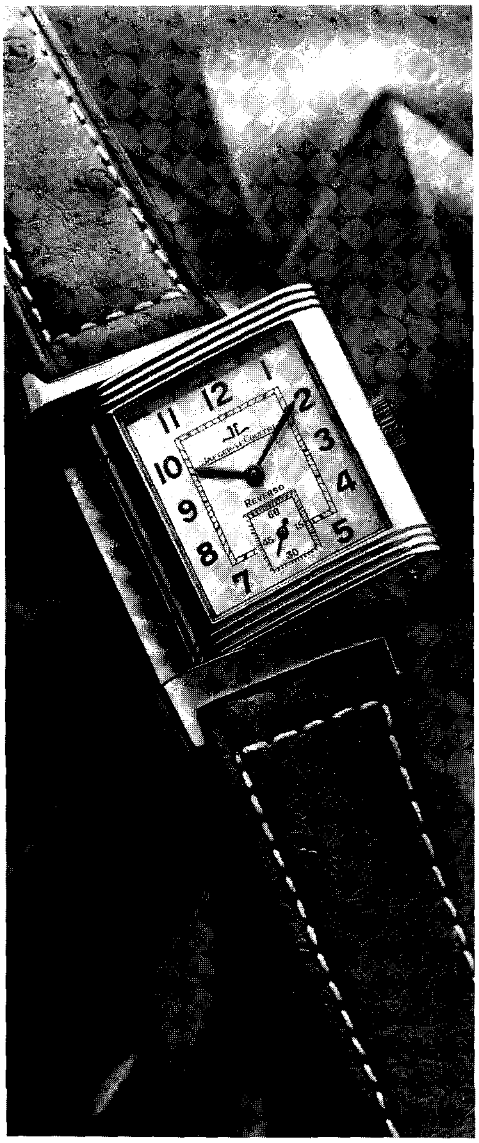
But Lake knew from previous experience that voters readily believe the stereotype of Republicans' favoring tax breaks for the wealthy and cuts in Social Security and Medicare. And so, she acknowledged, she used this stereotype in her polling to, as she put it, "frame the question very powerfully." She gave me the specific language of one such question: "Candidate X"—the Republican—"signed on to the Republican contract with their national leadership in Washington saying that he would support more tax cuts for the wealthy and increase defense spending, paid for by cuts in Social Security and Medicare. That's the type of failed policies we saw for twelve years, helping the wealthy and special interests at the expense of the middle class. Do you approve?"

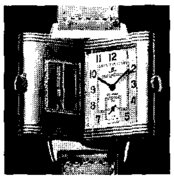
When I suggested to Coelho that asking questions in such a loaded manner hopelessly distorts the picture of what voters want, he replied, "That's what polling is all about, isn't it? You poll to get a response. The Republicans polled to get a response, and we polled to get a different response, and we did." When I pressed the issue, he said huffily, "Ideas are not the issue. The ideas are wonderful. Of course the ideas are popular. Tell me, who would not support cutting taxes? Tell me, who would not support balancing the budget? Tell me, who would not support a strong defense? It's taking the ideas and putting them together and enacting them that is the problem. Ideas are not the issue. It is putting all these ideas together that is the issue. That is what the Contract is. The Contract isn't ideas. It's putting all the ideas together and saying 'We can do this' that's the issue."

But the ideas in the Contract do matter. The Contract itself is a silly, obvious gimmick. It binds the Republicans who signed it to nothing; they are promising only to consider such steps as passing a balanced-budget amendment, not to actually vote one way or the other. It purports to limit congressional terms of office but neglects to mention that Gingrich intends to put forward legislation that would protect current members of Congress through a grandfather clause; Gingrich and his fellow-signatories are bravely promising to throw out the next generation of bums—not themselves. The ideas in the contract, however, are popular. That's why they are in there. The Contract was based on polls from its inception; every idea in it was there because Republican surveys told Republican politicians that people liked it.

"As we put the contract together, we had input from all of our candidates in and out of the House," Representative Armey told me. "On each issue, we asked if it had good standing with the American people. There is not a single one that pulls less than sixty per cent. We wouldn't write a contract that didn't have great standing with America. These issues have been around a long time, and have a long history of pulling."

The Republicans are counting on stereotypes, too. I asked Chuck Greener, director of communications for the Re-





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publican National Committee, if he was worried about the fact that some of the anti-immigrant, anti-welfare, anti-poor legislation that the Contract calls for a Republican 104th Congress to vote on during its first hundred days might strike some voters as too harsh, too coldheartedly Republican. Greener replied, "No, you're missing the point of it. We *know* that maybe the Dole soul of the Party is showing here. We think it's time for that to show. We think the Dole personality—'I'm a mean son of a bitch'—is maybe something the American public *wants* at this time. We think the American public is feeling, We need guys like that up there. We need some mean sons of bitches in Washington. We've got too many of the other kind as it is. So people look at Dole and Gingrich and they think, We need more like you up there. They think, You say you want to take on welfare? Cool. Let's get a mean son of a bitch up there and do the job right."

As for the Democrats' hope that the Contract will anger voters who remember the Republicans' cynical bait-and-switch tactics on taxes in the past, Greener said, "Maybe the voters' attitude is, All right, you guys go ahead and promise me a tax cut and that's fine, because I know you're going to take away from me in the end what you give me today. But the other side isn't even promising to give me anything at all; it's just promising to keep on taxing me. Maybe with you I'll get something at least in the short run, and I'll take what I can get."

THREE weeks after the Clinton forces joined battle with Gingrich's marchers to remind voters, in the contrast between Bill and Newt, just what Democrats and Republicans stand for, every sign suggests that the voters perceive the distinction—and a majority prefer the hard-edged anger of Gingrich to the President who feels their pain. On October 12th, a Times Mirror survey of registered voters found that fifty-two per cent said they were more likely to vote for a G.O.P. candidate next month; only the forty per cent who can be presumed to compose the diehard Democratic constituency said they would back a Democrat. The last time numbers like that came up was in 1954, when a Gallup poll shortly before Election Day found the G.O.P. leading the Democrats fifty-three per cent to forty-seven.

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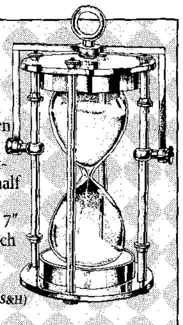

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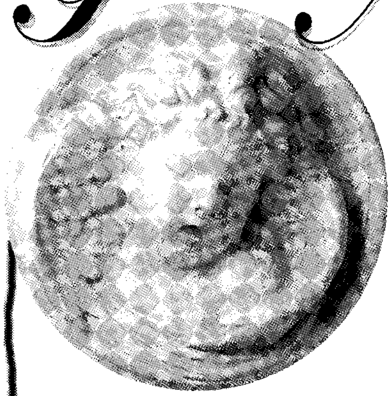
These results indicate the real scope of Bill Clinton's problem, and his party's. Deflecting the national political conversation from Clinton personally does not help much, because the anger toward the Democrats is inspired not simply by a dislike of Clinton but by a dislike of liberal Democratic federalism wearing Clinton's face. The President could easily improve his own reputation with the voters before Election Day—given his performance skills, and also given his recent foreign-policy successes (so far) in standing down Saddam Hussein and restoring Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in Haiti. Through these triumphs, Bill Clinton has finally appeared strong and decisive in crisis. But even a Clinton rise in the polls is unlikely to benefit any other Democrats much next month. The 1994 races really are about ideas—some of them half-baked ideas, self-contradictory ideas, cynically arrived-at ideas, perhaps, but ideas all the same.

In 1954, at the last moment the Democrats came back. They went on to regain control of the House, which they had lost in 1947, thus beginning the forty-year reign that the Gingrichites hope to end this year. It is possible that 1994 will see a similar outcome. The combined efforts of Gingrich and Clinton to transform the elections into a national referendum may ginger up enough Democrats and scare enough swing voters to keep Gingrich out of the House Speaker's office, and perhaps even deny Bob Dole the Senate Majority Leader's seat. If that happens, some of the more sunny-sided citizens of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue will ballyhoo the victory. They will be missing the point. Even modest G.O.P. gains in November will serve to reinforce what the congressional Republicans already possess—the power to block most, if not all, of the legislation Bill Clinton needs to appear an effective President, while retaining the all-purpose alibi they have wielded so devastatingly this fall: it's a Democratic Congress, after all, so don't blame us. Whether their victory is big or small, they'll have the tools they need, and there's no doubt they'll have the will to use them. Gingrich's awkward speech on September 27th was not the culmination of a war but its declaration. If you thought the 103rd Congress was the last word in bloody-minded divisiveness, wait until you see the fratricidal 104th. ♦

GUARDIAN ANGELS



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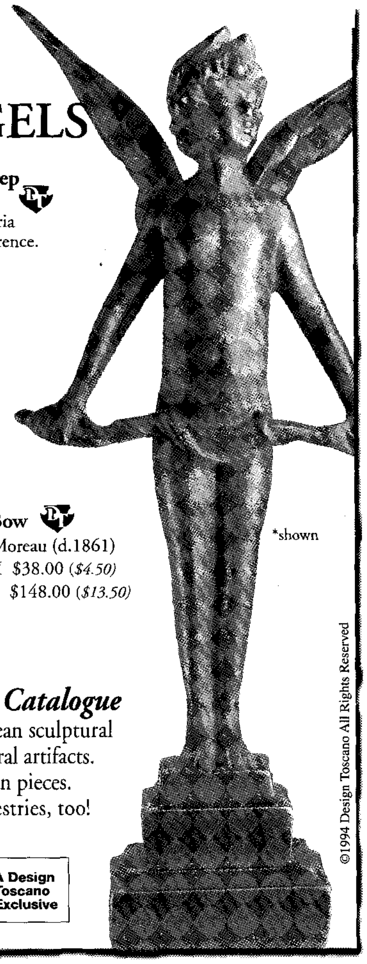

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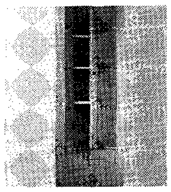

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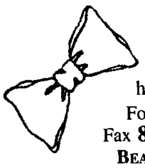

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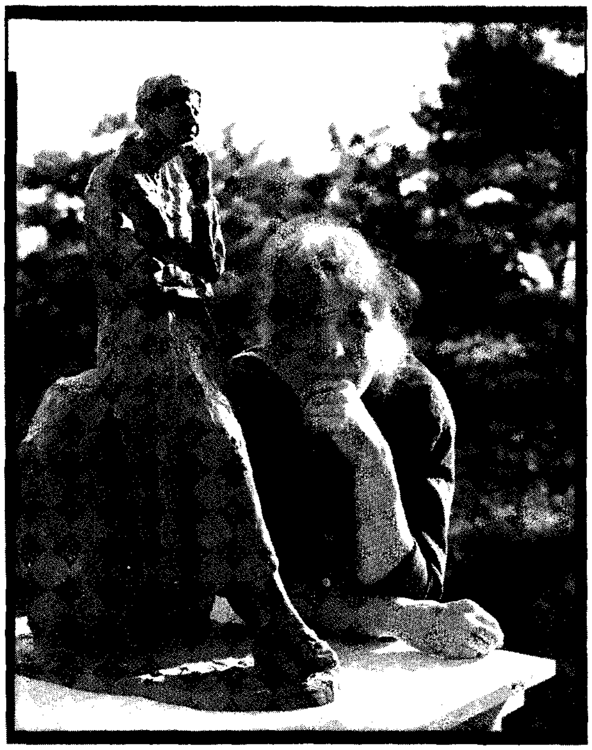
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

MRS. ROOSEVELT, EIGHT FEET TALL

How does a sculptor capture a personality as outsized as Eleanor Roosevelt's? The process relies on new insight into the former First Lady's family and world.

BY PHILIP HAMBURGER

PENELOPE JENCKS, the sculptor, is a good friend of mine, and a Cape Cod summer neighbor. Eleanor Roosevelt is someone whose memory I—and millions of others—hold dear. So when I heard that Jencks was working in her studio, in Wellfleet, on a statue of Mrs. Roosevelt, to be placed at the southern tip of Riverside Park in Manhattan, I picked up the phone and called her. "I am deep in the project, and totally dedicated," she said. "I know where I'm going, but it takes time. Come on up, and we'll talk."



Penelope Jencks: Creating the first statue of Mrs. Roosevelt for New York, a city she inspired in hard times.

EILEEN TRAVELL

Wellfleet is a venerable town (incorporated 1763) jutting out into the Atlantic on one side and Cape Cod Bay on the other, near the hooked elbow of Cape Cod. Jencks lives in a gray-shingled Cape Cod-style house on the bay side in a part of Wellfleet known as Bound Brook Island, and works in a shingled studio a short distance away. In the early days of the Republic, Bound Brook actually was an island. Then, with the coming of the railroad and its dikes, the land was gradually filled in, and Bound Brook is an island no longer. Even today, though, driving over to Bound Brook (a matter of minutes) leaves one with a sense of having travelled to some dreamlike far-off place. You follow narrow, unmarked sand roads, framed by tall oaks and pines, up and down steep hills, and there are only a few spots where you can turn in and wait for an oncoming car to pass. Wellfleet residents take a certain fierce and obstinate pride in the signs that identify their houses. Metal nameplates would be considered scandalously infra dig. Residents merely find a small piece of wood, preferably of irregular shape, paint their name on it, and nail it to a convenient tree. Time and weather take their inevitable toll of the markers, and many of the signs have come perilously close to invisibility. Although these particular woods happen to be full of artists, poets, and professors, there is nothing remotely spurious, or falsely modest, about the simplicity of these nametags. Eleanor Roosevelt would feel completely at home on Bound Brook.

The Jencks house sits on a broad slope leading down to the bay. The vista is striking: at this point, the bay seems as wide as an ocean, and on windy days it kicks up high, proud waves. I never visit the Jencks place without imagining that I am at Dingle Bay, in County

Kerry. Penelope Jencks was in her studio when I arrived. She is a tall, strikingly handsome woman in her fifties, and some of her features have an uncanny resemblance to Eleanor Roosevelt's—she has the same inquiring eyes and mobile mouth, and she moves in the same self-respecting and forceful manner. I looked around. County Kerry disappeared from my mind. I had entered a cluttered world dominated by the image and the personality of Eleanor Roosevelt. Scattered about were half a dozen bronze maquettes of the sculpture Jencks is working on. They show Mrs. R., her left hand under her chin. Hatless and wearing a long coat, she is leaning against a rock. Her feet are crossed. Everywhere I looked, I saw large bulletin boards displaying more than two hundred photocopies of Mrs. R., in myriad poses. "I've collected these from everywhere," Jencks said. "They are a tremendous help in my attempt to make the sculpture believable." In some pictures, Mrs. Roosevelt is smiling; in others, she is not. In some she is standing, in others sitting. In some she wears a hat; in others she is hatless. The bulletin boards have been skillfully arranged. For example, one of the pictures shows her facing right. In another, she faces straight out; in still another she faces left. "I study them continually," Jencks said. "I like looking at them. I study them for the shape of the neck, the way the neck rises. I find her hair beautiful. I am fascinated that although the upper part of her face remains constant, the lower part constantly changes. I often wonder, Am I looking at the same person?" In all the pictures, Mrs. R. is alone. There are no pictures of F.D.R. in the room.

Smack in the middle of the studio was an eight-foot-tall object, haphazardly wrapped in swirls of black and white plastic and leaning against a plaster rock. "Mrs. Roosevelt?" I asked.

"I hope so," Jencks said. "In clay. Once I am satisfied—and I am hard to satisfy—it will be cast in plaster, and, finally, in bronze." The figure stands eight feet tall—two feet taller than Mrs. R. herself, and two feet one inch taller than Jencks. "What you see here," Jencks said, waving her hand in a wide arc, "is work in progress. Everything is in flux, everything constantly changes. There are moments, as I'm working on the sculpture, when her body language becomes overly strong—so much more important than the face. While doing certain parts, I feel that I know exactly what she looked like at exactly that moment. The other day—for a moment—the head seemed too low. Those moments! And the meaning of those moments! One instant, Mrs. R. is there before me. The next instant, she is not. I suppose that I never stop thinking about what I am working on. Let's talk about rocks. I love rocks. In fact, I adore rocks. When I was younger and was living in Westport, Connecticut, I would swim out around the breakwater and admire the rocks—just because they were rocks. My sculpture of the great historian Samuel Eliot Morison—it stands on the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Exeter Street in Boston—has Morison sitting on a rock. He has binoculars in one hand and the other resting on a stack of books, is wearing a yachting cap, and steadfastly looks out to sea. But that sculpture, in a sense, is dominated by the rock. For this work, the opposite must be true: Mrs. R. must dominate the rock. The rock, for me, is really a transition, an imaginary space. The rock is the pedestal—the viewer's space, the world of the normal-sized person in relation to the sculpture. Without the rock, you would have an oversized person. The rock brings the sculpture to you and separates you from it at the same time—a breathing space for the viewer."

I ASKED how Jencks had become involved in the project.

"I have always admired Mrs. Roosevelt," she said. "It's a mysterious symbiosis. I have always felt that I could identify with her as a woman. This is hard to explain: She was always, for me, a presence, even when I was younger. A *real* presence. For example, my mother was quite tall, and people often compared her, physically, to Mrs. Roosevelt. This did not please my mother one tiny bit. She was vain and didn't wish to be compared to anybody. For another thing, I have always been in sympathy with Mrs. Roosevelt's politics, her idealism. Also a certain awkwardness, what some people saw as plainness. I've read a great deal about her, and about her uncle Theodore Roosevelt. I've spent time at the Roosevelt Library, at Hyde Park. In reading about her in books by Joseph Lash, I felt a special, intimate

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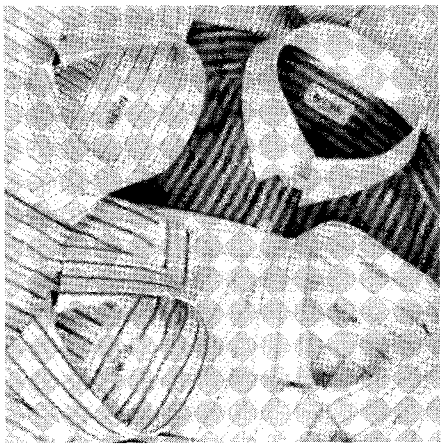

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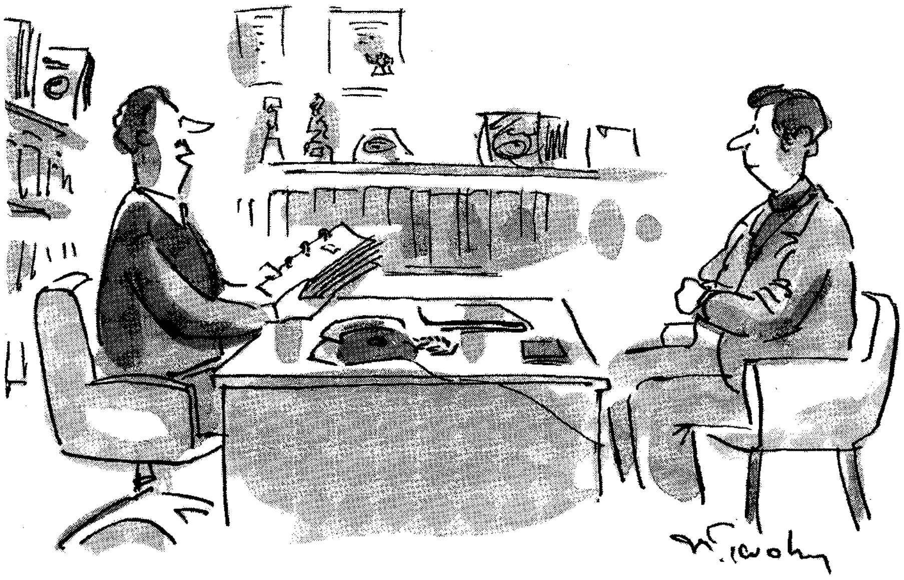
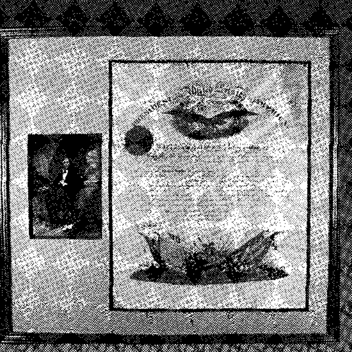
empathy. I wondered how she had gone from a shy childhood to the dominant, outspoken public figure known around the world. All this intrigued me. So when I read in the late eighties that a man named Herbert Zohn—a New Yorker—was anxious to sponsor a statue of Mrs. Roosevelt, to be placed near where he lived, and was getting together a jury to pick a sculptor for the task, I became intensely interested. There were some four hundred entries—slides of previous works were submitted—and ten people were invited to make maquettes. Happily, I won. My proposal seems to have struck the right note." Jencks walked over to a nearby table, picked up some papers, and handed them to me. "My proposal," she said.

I jotted down some excerpts: "I would have her alone, solitary. When she felt troubled or in need of peace and quiet she would sometimes find time to spend in the woods. While in Washington, she wrote in her diary of visiting the Mrs. Henry Adams monument by Saint-Gaudens. She spoke of its setting in Rock Creek Cemetery." At this point, Jencks reminded me that Mrs. Adams had taken her own life. I went back to the proposal: "She felt that its quiet strength was not despair but the triumph of the spirit over sadness and grief. . . . I would like to think that she might have had a similar sort of response to this piece that I propose to do of her. . . . I am trying to capture a sense of peace and strength, a brooding, pensive woman leaning against a rock, not quite seated, her hand under her chin (as she often held it), gazing thoughtfully out into the park. In spite of her tremendous energy and activity, I believe that her true strength came from an inner searching, an almost overwhelming honesty, and a conviction that mankind has the ability (and desire) to 'do the right thing' if only that thing can be discovered."

Jencks has found that working on the statue has become a consuming passion. Since she displays all the characteristics of a true perfectionist, no step in the process comes easily. Although she usually spends winters with her husband, Sidney Hurwitz, who is a noted printmaker and teacher (he teaches art at Boston University), at their house in Newton, just outside Boston, this past winter she stayed on the Cape alone, her only companion being Sam, a newborn black poodle. "Great company," Penelope said, "especially when I was deep in work." The winter was a rigorous one, with frigid temperatures and heavy snowstorms. "There were days when I was truly isolated here," she said. "Immense snowdrifts, perniciously icy roads—weather that would have been a challenge to Mrs. Roosevelt. She was intrepid. I think she would have loved it. Often, I had to call in to town for help—someone to come and plow me out."



"I liked the plot and the characters and the way it was written, and I can offer you a million five."



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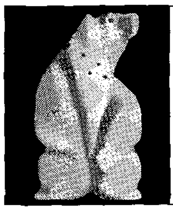

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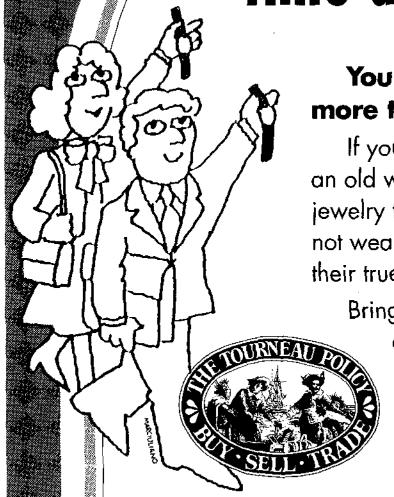
From the start of the enterprise, Jencks found herself getting deeper and deeper into the matter of the rock on which Mrs. Roosevelt leans. Manhattan schist, the type of rock found in Riverside Park, comes in layers and is flaky—unsuitable for a sculpture. So Jencks chose granite. But when it came to the shape of the rock, she found herself in an area of great indecision. Exactly what shape should it be? She would go off to a quarry in New Milford, near Danbury, and stay for weeks at a time. There she made rock portraits in clay—twenty of them. (Each model was scaled at an inch and a half to the foot of the plan for the statue itself.) The weather was so cold she had to work in fingerless gloves, and, because it was deer-hunting season, she wore a red hat and a pink jacket, and left the car radio on, turned up to ear-blasting decibels. To amuse herself, and also to ward off hunters, she would hum Bach's D Minor Double Concerto. She saw only two hunters, was never mistaken for any species of quadruped, and worked undisturbed.

Jencks now went into the next room, and returned with two cups of coffee. She began to talk about herself. She was born in 1936, in Baltimore. Her father, Gardner Jencks, was a concert pianist and composer. Her mother, Ruth, was the daughter of Raymond Pearl, a professor in the Department of Hygiene and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. The family moved to Westport when she was six, and she was brought up there and on the Cape. She went off to school at High Mowing, in New Hampshire; later, she spent a year at a school in Geneva and then two years at Swarthmore, mostly studying French, and ended her formal education, having turned permanently to art, after receiving a B.F.A. in painting from Boston University. A major influence in that decision was her study of art with the painter Hans Hofmann, who conducted classes in Provincetown. "He was the most wonderful teacher," she said. "He made you feel that being an artist was the most important thing in the entire world. He gave me a sense of monumentality. He made me see objects in relation to one another, and to reality. There is no way in which I can express what the Hofmann experience meant. His presence is still with me."

One of the joys of working on the



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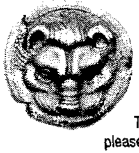

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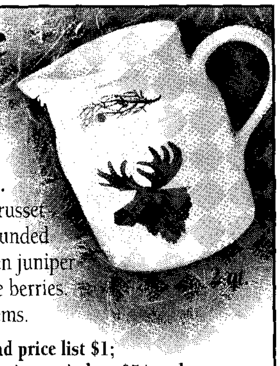

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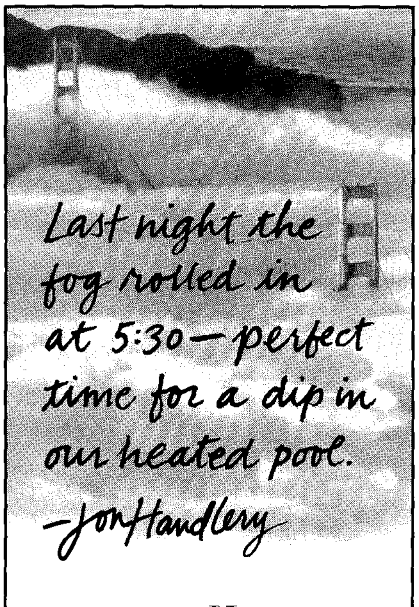
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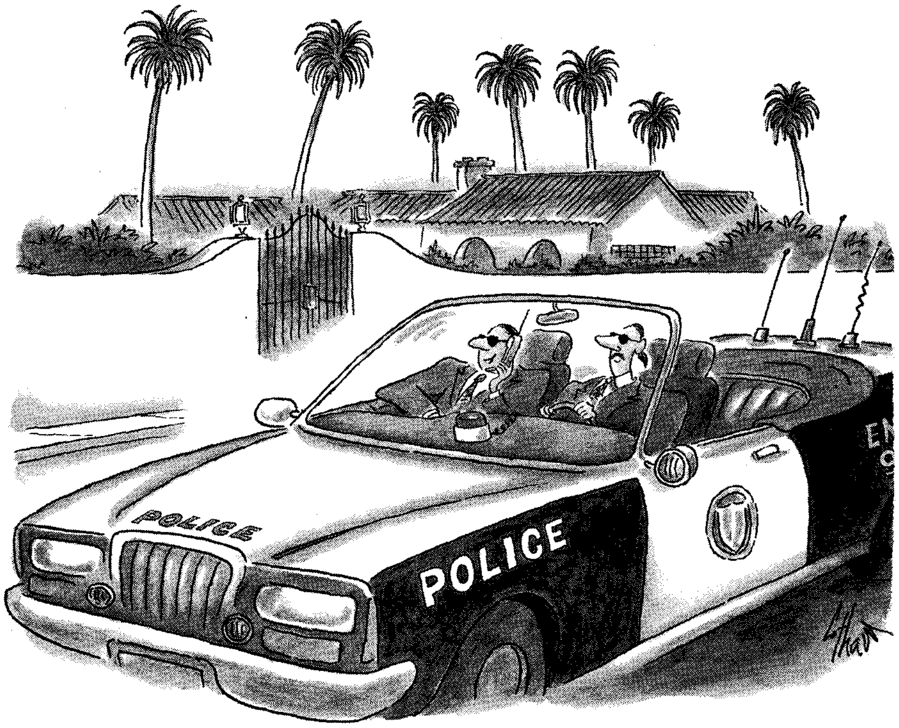

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statue, Jencks told me, is the friendship that has developed between her and Franklin Roosevelt III, Mrs. Roosevelt's grandson, who is in his fifties and teaches economics at Sarah Lawrence, and his daughter, Phoebe Roosevelt, who is twenty-nine and is a graduate student in American history at Columbia. Jencks first met Roosevelt, who goes through life under the rubric Frank Roosevelt, in 1988, at a gathering that celebrated her selection as the sculptor. A crowd was milling around, and someone said to Jencks, "Are you part of the family? There's a resemblance." This gave her a small, surreal jolt, since all along she had felt a mysterious connection between herself and her subject. Some time later, while spending the night with Frank Roosevelt and his wife in New York she remarked that although her models were tall she was having trouble with the proportions of the torso. "I don't really have a proper model," she said. "I like a human body I can relate to." Mr. Roosevelt's wife, Jinx, spoke up. "Our daughter doesn't look like us, but she bears a resemblance to Eleanor Roosevelt. Give her a call. Perhaps she'll be willing to do some modelling for you."

Working on the statue has also led to a visit, with Frank Roosevelt, to Hillary Rodham Clinton in the White House. "A memorable experience," said Jencks. "We met in the Red Room. I mostly remember a nice old fire, a portrait of Audubon, and how warm and friendly she was when she entered the room and gave Frank Roosevelt a kiss. We dipped into pastry delights—éclair-type stuff with strawberries on top. Someone told her that I was spending the winter alone on Cape Cod, working, and she said, 'I remember a book about a man who spent an entire year alone in a house far out on a Cape Cod beach.' 'That's Henry Beston's "The Outermost House," ' I said. The connection was instantaneous and important to me." Mrs. Clinton remarked that she felt close to Eleanor Roosevelt. Until she came to the White House herself, she said, she had not realized the degree of vilification suffered by Mrs. R. when she was First Lady. She felt that she would get through the thickets, and took courage by thinking of the example of Mrs. R. "I didn't say anything, but I suddenly remembered how Mrs. Clinton had said that throughout the campaign she had often kept up her spirits by having imaginary conversations with Mrs. R., and how this was distorted and uglified by some radio commentators into an absurd demonic matter of mystical 'voices'—horrid stuff." The poodle interrupted our talk. "Impossible to be lonely with Sam around," Jencks said.

IN New York, I had a chat with Frank Roosevelt. A modest man, he is delighted to be associated with the Jencks project, for it brings back tender memories of his grandmother. "I had an apolitical upbringing," he said, "but I vividly recall my father telling me how his mother had taken him, during the Depression, to the edge of Riverside Park—prophetically, near where the sculpture is to be placed—to see the jerry-built, improvised shanties of the unemployed, at a spot known as Hooverville. My mother and father were divorced. My mother moved to Detroit, my father to a farm in Dutchess County. I'd spend winter holidays with Mother, summer vacation with Father. I didn't think too much about my grandmother until I was about halfway through Yale. In my junior year, I went to South Africa for three weeks with an Afrikaner classmate. I guess this was the point of awakening. I went to Alexandra. I went to the townships. I saw what that was all about. And when I came back to the States I connected what I had seen to my own country and to my grandmother. I woke up one day and realized that this woman was not just the lovely, friendly grandmother who would buy Christmas presents for her grandchildren all through the year and store them in a closet. I realized this was Eleanor Roosevelt, and her interests and mine were converging. I wrote her, and she responded, and we became friends. I'd come down from New Haven to New York or Val-Kill Cottage, at Hyde Park, occasionally to have lunch with her and some people she had invited who fascinated me, like Walter Reuther. We corresponded about the United Nations, about China. She was knocked down by a taxicab around this time, and I was upset. My concern touched her. I recall once writing a fourteen-page review of a book by William Buckley. I didn't like the major thrust of his ideas, but I was confused by his raising the question, at one point, of whether Social Security should be compulsory. This troubled me. I wrote my grandmother and she became my teacher. She explained the necessity of the Social Security system.

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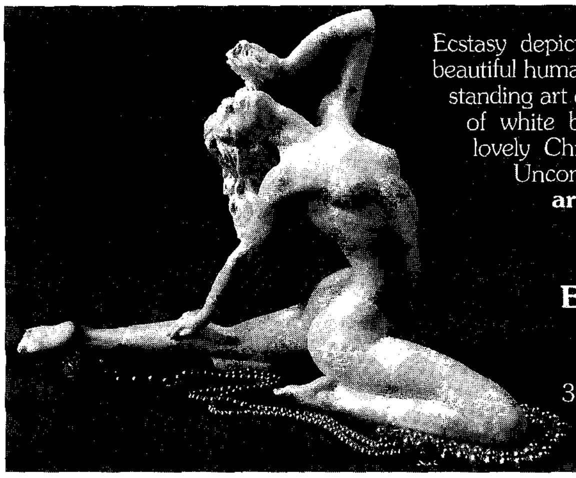

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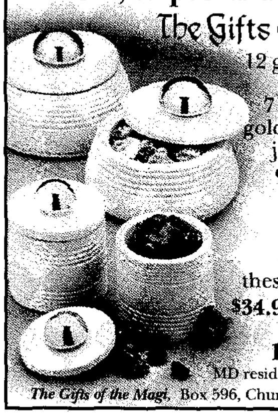

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ences in connection with Penelope's sculpture. Back in February, 1993, there was an event called 'First Ladies of Song' at Alice Tully Hall. Kitty Carlisle Hart was there; also Lena Horne and Judy Collins. And Mrs. Clinton. Mrs. Clinton talked about Mrs. Roosevelt. She spotted a thirty-inch maquette of Penelope's sculpture on the stage, and instantly said, 'I would like to have one of those for my desk.' Penelope kindly agreed to make a smaller version of the maquette, fourteen inches tall, and make copies available for purchase to help raise money for the sculpture. I wrote Mrs. Clinton and said we would like to present her with the first one. No reply for some time. Then, one day last winter, the White House called and invited us down. Going there was ecstasy for me. I was struck by Mrs. Clinton's warmth. I talked with her briefly, thanking her for bringing back the memory of Mrs. Roosevelt, and I said that we had waited a long time for this. I was deeply moved at being brought back to the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt, some thirty years after my last visit there."

I also had a chat with Phoebe Roosevelt, the great-granddaughter of Eleanor Roosevelt. "I loved being in Wellfleet, and with Penny," she said. "I had never modelled before. Somehow, I felt that this had nothing to do with me. I was—and am—merely facilitating her vision of Eleanor Roosevelt, helping Penelope achieve what is in Penelope's head. I found that I wasn't the least bit shy. I felt that she looked a bit like my great-grandmother—someone I never knew, since I was born in 1965 and she died in 1962. I found that Penelope has the relentless energy that I have always associated with Eleanor Roosevelt. Also, she has a tremendous sense of precision—knows exactly what she is looking for. She spent a great deal of time going over my shoulders—felt they were closer to Eleanor Roosevelt's than any of her previous models'. She did a great deal of measuring of the torso, with calipers, in relation to the legs. She was concerned with the look of the statue, but also deeply concerned with exactitude. Penny talks a great deal while working. She would tell me not to be offended if she sometimes asked me the same questions she had asked a minute before. 'I get so absorbed in my work,' she would say. As for Eleanor Roosevelt, most of what I know I have reached through my reading, or by listening to my father and grandfather. I am taken with her boldness and her humanity. A teacher of mine in high school was deeply influenced by her and, in a strange way, wanted to express gratitude through me. This gives me an odd feeling."

The other day, I went back to Wellfleet and poked my head into Penelope's studio. The sun had just set, and the bay reflected a gentle sky of grays and blues. Sam, the poodle, greeted me at the door. He's a big boy now, and almost knocked me down. I walked into the studio, which was still dominated by the statue. Eleanor Roosevelt's presence is almost palpable. Jencks has built two high, sturdy wooden platforms onto which she can climb to work on the face. Those panels of hundreds of photocopies of Mrs. R. in all sizes and shapes and poses have now been placed on four high easels, which Penelope can look at while standing on the platforms. "I'm moving along," she said. "I have a long way to go. I'm still in the process. Not long ago, I got back basically to the skeleton. Then I put on a head, and realized, quite unexpectedly, that it looked a great deal like the head of a sister of my father's. I had incorporated my aunt into the sculpture. I think this was because my father always said I reminded him of his sister, and her name was also Eleanor. In a sense, I had gone on automatic pilot. One tends to do a self-portrait—one's own proportions seem to come through. I realized that I had to shake off all the intertwining personalities, and I said to myself, 'You must get back to the Eleanoid and the Rooseveltoid.' A strange dream has helped me immensely. I was working away in the studio, in the dream, kneeling and sculpting, when I heard someone say, somewhere, 'Oh, here comes Mrs. Roosevelt!' I instantly thought, What a relief—I will never have to search for a model again. She walked right in that door. She was twenty feet tall. My God, I thought, I will never be able to sculpt this heroic figure, but without saying a word she smiled at me with such a beneficent smile—not a touch of grandiosity—that my fears melted away. Then she disappeared, just melted away. But I am secure in the knowledge that I have found Eleanor Roosevelt in my dreams." ♦

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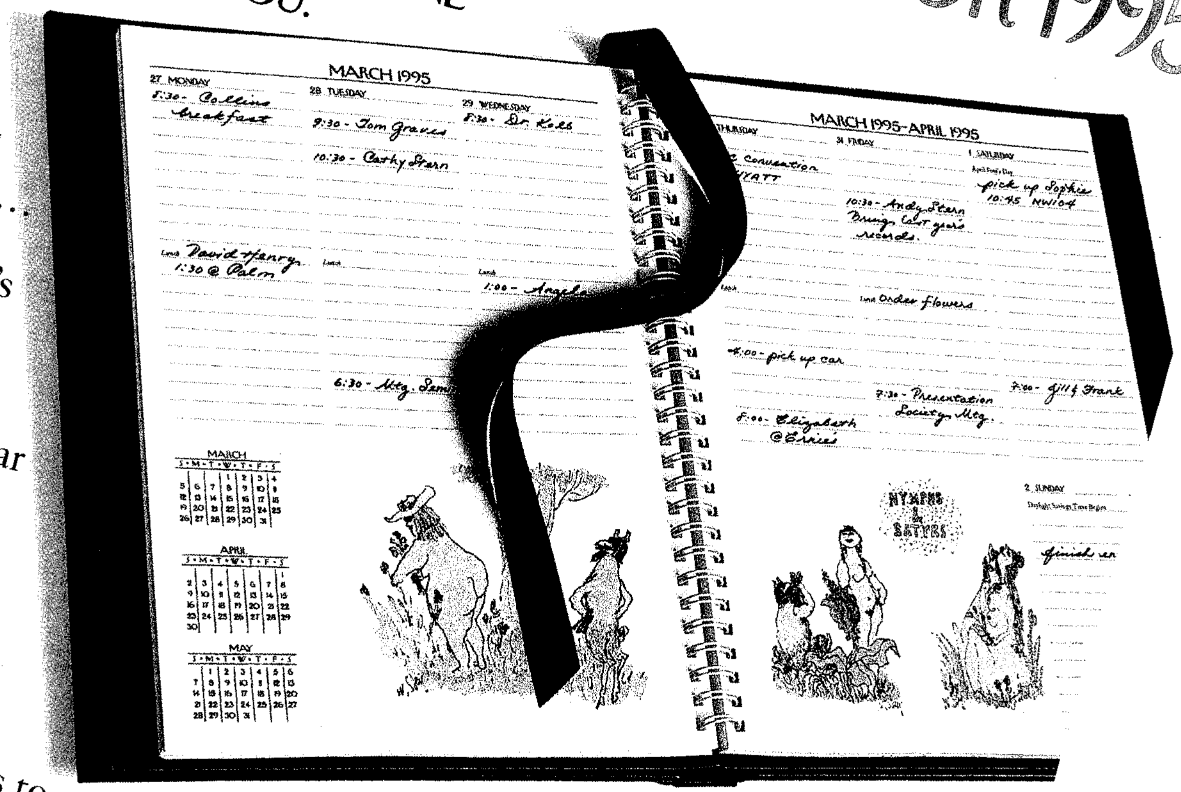

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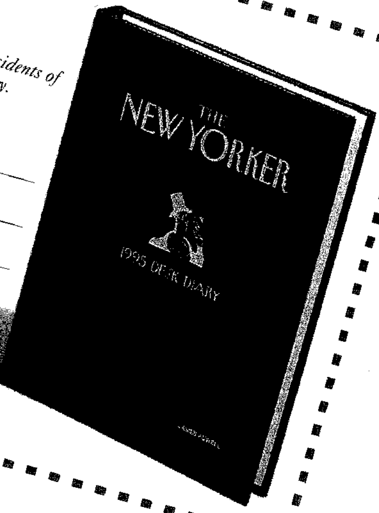
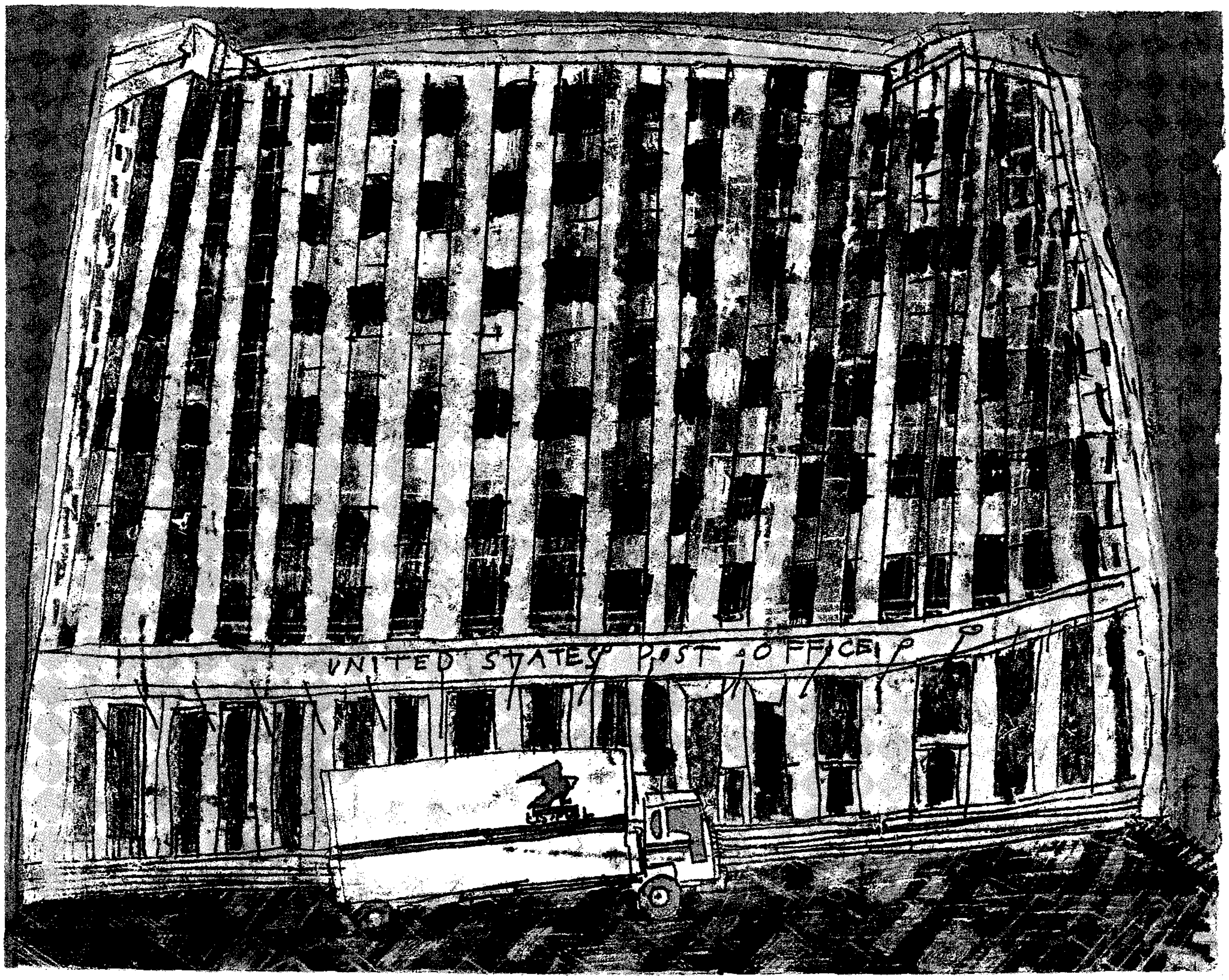




A REPORTER AT LARGE

LOST IN THE MAIL

With its burning stacks of undelivered letters, the scandal-ridden Chicago post office became the paradigm of a big-city institution in crisis. But the biggest scandal was the official stonewalling that allowed the system to collapse.

BY JONATHAN FRANZEN

THE fall of the Chicago post office began before the public saw the portents: before the undead letters rose up in every corner of the city to haunt the guilty management—a hundred sacks of months-old mail in the back of a North Side letter carrier's truck, two hundred pounds of fresh mail burning underneath a South Side viaduct, more than fifteen hundred pieces of mail moldering in a shallow grave beneath a West Side porch, and a truckload of mail and parcels in the closets of a Chicago carrier's suburban condo. The fall began on Thursday, January 20, 1994, at about two in the afternoon, when a woman named Debra Doyle called the manager of her local station and told him that her family had not received mail since the previous Thursday.

Over the years, Doyle had come to expect poor service from the Uptown station, which served her neighborhood. Two- and three-day hiatuses in delivery no longer surprised her. But an entire week without mail, even a very cold week in January, seemed extreme. On the telephone, the station manager, Thomas Nichols, explained to Doyle that his carriers could not deliver the mail, because their trucks wouldn't start. He said that if Doyle wanted her mail she would have to get it from him at the station. Perhaps Nichols didn't think that Doyle would actually venture out in the subzero

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

weather, but after speaking to him she went straight to her car.

The population served by Chicago's Uptown station is, in its diversity, practically an encyclopedia of contemporary American city dwellers. Professionals and retirees live in high-rises and large houses near Lake Michigan, transients and drug addicts come and go on Lawrence and Bryn Mawr Avenues, and on either side of the El tracks Asian and Eastern European immigrants share alleys with lifelong middle-class Chicagoans like Doyle. For years, the one thing all these people had in common was the 60640 Zip Code—that, and the unpleasant experience that was in store for them whenever they had to visit the Uptown station. The lobby smelled like a subway platform. The clerks seemed to have no pleasure in life but breaking for coffee at peak hours and hurling parcels marked "Fragile" at distant hampers. Customers budgeted an hour when they went to claim a package.

When she arrived at the station, Doyle asked to see Nichols. She was told that he was not in the building. Skeptical, she dialled the station's number from the pay phone in the lobby. Nichols answered. What ensued was an archetypal Chicago scene: an angry postal customer demanding explanations from an evasive, unhelpful postal manager. Scenes like this ended, at best, with a promise of better service in the future, at worst, with the manager shouting obscenities at the customer.

On this particular afternoon, however, as Doyle and Nichols locked horns on the telephone, a tall, energetic woman strode into the Uptown lobby and asked if she could help. She introduced herself as Gayle Campbell. Doyle explained her problem, and Campbell disappeared into the back of the station. A few minutes later, she returned with a week's worth of Doyle's mail. She also gave Doyle the numbers of her beeper and her home telephone, and urged her to call if she had any more trouble with her delivery. Then she disappeared into the back of the station again.

The United States Postal Service, the country's universal hard-copy delivery system, has a problem with big cities. Last winter, when Doyle met Campbell, the latest survey had shown that eighty-eight per cent of the nation's households found their mail service "good," "very good," or "excellent," but cities like New York and Washington had satisfaction indexes in the mid-seventies, and Chicago, with a score of sixty-four per cent, ranked dead last. More than a third of Chicagoans rated their service as "poor" or "fair," and the discontent was even greater in the city's crowded, affluent north-lakefront districts, where service had been execrable for a decade and consumer frustration had reached an intensity that seemed comic to those who didn't share it.

A REPRESENTATIVE Chicago horror story, unusual only in its protraction, is that of Marilyn Katz, a media and political consultant. In 1986, Katz and her husband bought a ninety-year-old house on Magnolia Avenue, a stable, uncrowded neighborhood in the Uptown district. When they had lived there for three years, their mail abruptly stopped coming. Katz called the Uptown station four times, over a period of two weeks, before the station manager provided an explanation. The explanation was that Katz's mail carrier had declared her house abandoned.

Service then resumed, but only fitfully. Katz's mail came late, if it came at all, and often it was heavily seasoned with mail for other houses in her neighborhood. She engaged in especially lively trade with the nearby 5500 block of Lakewood. Her homeowner's insurance was cancelled, and so was her health insurance: she had never received the bills. Before leaving on a ten-day vacation in August of 1990, she received notice that her phone service would be terminated for non-payment. When she returned from vacation, her phone bills from May, June, July, and August were waiting for her. A few months later, she noticed that she had stopped getting *The New Yorker*. When she called the subscription department, she learned that the Uptown station had sent notification that she had moved away.

In the winter of 1992, Katz hand-delivered copies of a questionnaire on mail service to every household in a sixteen-block area of her neighborhood. The returns brought a litany of complaints similar to her own, plus fresh horrors: "Mailman drinks, erratic, hangs out with peculiar friends during delivery"; "Mailwoman delivers mail with her children and has children deliver the mail"; "Mailman harasses us at night, asks for money."

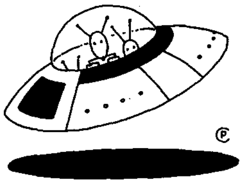
Katz sent her survey results to the Chicago postmaster. Six months later, having received no reply, she began to work with her alderman, Mary Ann Smith, whose office had been processing postal complaints since 1988. Smith extracted a promise from Jimmie Mason, the new postmaster, to respond to Katz's survey by October 2nd, but it was midwinter before Smith was able to arrange for Katz and her neighbors to meet with him. Mason asked them for their help in monitoring mail service. Katz said that she didn't want to monitor mail, she just wanted to get it. Mason said improvement would take time. In the interim, he promised to repaint Uptown's corner mailboxes, which had been heavily tagged by local youth. He also offered to provide the community with its own blue paint to keep the boxes clean. To Katz, this seemed the ultimate in codependency: "Not only can we do delivery and monitoring for them. We can also paint."

Although Mary Ann Smith continued to arrange "town meetings," at which various postal officials made various promises, service in Uptown did not improve. Finally, last winter, after six years of steady agitation, Smith concluded that no force she could muster locally would compel the United States Postal Service to listen. She urged the City Council's Committee on Finance to hold hearings on the economic impact of poor postal service, and then she gave up. "We'd done our part," she says. "I'm not really supposed to spend my time on this."

Katz, meanwhile, had turned over her important outgoing mail to Federal Express and had arranged for direct deposit of her checks. She made sure that all valuable documents were sent to her office downtown. Just as she avoided other universal public services by driving a car to work and sending her children to private school, she now bypassed the Postal Service, as much as possible, with her telephone, fax machine, and computer. She, too, had given up. "There was no accountability," she says. "It was clear that the post office didn't care."

For Marilyn Katz and Mary Ann Smith and Debra Doyle—and for others as well, like Representative Sidney R. Yates of the Ninth District of Illinois, who had been criticizing Chicago postal operations for a decade—the most frustrating part of dealing with the post office was that nobody connected with it could explain why the mail was not being delivered. Katz occasionally heard excuses (for instance, the Uptown manager confided to her that postal workers' unions prevented him from disciplining his carriers), but she never received even a token explanation of the failures that her survey had uncovered. Officials were cordial at town meetings and silent afterward. It was as if they not only didn't care; they didn't even know they had a problem.

When Doyle met Gayle Campbell in the Uptown lobby, she found an administrator who plainly did care. Later in the evening, when she spoke to Campbell at home, she realized she had also found an administrator who knew the post office had a problem. Campbell was voluble and angry, and Doyle quickly recognized—so quickly that she called Patrick O'Connor, her alderman, the very next morning—that frustration inside the post office had finally reached the level of the frustration on the outside. With this equalization, information began to flow.



THE Postal Service, though forever maligned, is the most constant and best-loved presence of federal government in the nation's daily life. My sense of being an American devolves in some small part from knowing that we still have the best mail service and lowest postage rates and ugliest stamps of any industrialized nation. (How Italian the Italian post office is; how German the German.) For a bureaucracy, moreover, the Postal Service performs a difficult task creditably. I suspect that postal horrors would fade into insignificance if every household in the country had to deal with the Department of Labor or the Navy six times a week. Although the Postmaster General, Marvin Runyon, is fond of calling his fifty-billion-dollar-a-year operation the eighth-largest corporation in the country, he labors under constraints that no private-sector C.E.O. has to deal with: responsibilities to congressional committees; maintenance of genuine diversity in hiring and promotion, with special attention to veterans and the handicapped; and, above all, the provision of universal flat-rate first-class service. The Postal Service embodies the dream of democracy. Any citizen, even a convict or a child, can communicate with any other for the same low price. This abiding ideal of universal service is what preserves an institution that for most of its existence has dwelled at the dangerous intersection of big government, big business, and local politics. Were it not for this ideal, Washington would have long ago sold off the whole operation.

The strain in the relations between Chicago and its post office is, in some measure, an inevitable consequence of universal service. I've noticed that whenever I talk to postal workers I feel I'm at an epistemic disadvantage. The workers don't have to know the particulars of my personal involvement with mail, such as that I religiously make carbon copies of my personal letters, or that I've changed my address sixteen times in the last five years (in the last year alone I've had four addresses in Philadelphia), or that as a boy I collected all three variations of the famously flawed 1962 Dag Hammarskjöld issue, or that I consider a postage scale the one really indispensable small appliance. What postal workers know about me is what they know about absolutely everybody: I'm a customer.

Like the Catholic clergy, the Postal Service is stranger to us than we are to it. Oprah Winfrey makes a koan of the question: Why do postal workers shoot each other? Despite its ubiquity, the post office remains among the most recondite of American work environments. It's a foreign country within the country. It even has its own interactive satellite television network, via which workers receive news and exhortations from L'Enfant Plaza in Washington.

Many workers keep their postal lives strictly separate from their private lives. Chicago clerks and carriers who live in rough neighborhoods tell me they don't reveal their occupation to their neighbors, because working for the post office marks you as a person of means, a target for muggers. A high-level administrator tells me he's learned to say that he works for "the government," because otherwise people ask him why they didn't get their mail last Wednesday.

When postal workers hang out together, they talk about who slept with whom for a promotion, and which handler was found dead of natural causes on a sofa in the employee lounge. They speculate about the reason that Marvin Runyon's eyes weren't blinking during a television interview, about whether it was due to medication for his back pain. They revel in dog lore. I'm advised that if I'm ever set upon by a pack of strays I should mace the one that barks first. I'm told the story of a suburban carrier who was forced to take refuge from an enraged German shepherd in a storage mailbox that he'd been throwing his banana peels and milk cartons into all summer.

On a hot June morning, I stand in the comfortably shabby work area of Cragin station, on Chicago's West Side, while a carrier named Larry Johnson finishes tossing mail into his "case"—a console of pigeonholes with a slot for every pair of addresses on his route. Sorting a day's mail takes a carrier anywhere from an hour and a half to four hours; the workday starts as early as five-thirty. "It doesn't take a hell of a lot of brains to do this job," Johnson tells me, "other than the fact that you've got to know how to read." He adds, with a laugh, that in the post office you can't always take literacy for granted. Johnson is a burly man whose blue postal slacks ride low on his hips; he's thirty-five, but his physical weariness makes him seem older. He gives me a cannister of mace (his own cannister sees action two or three times a week), and I follow him outside to his car, a scarred burgundy Lincoln sedan, whose trunk he has to prop open with a tire iron while he fills it with bundles of mail and one shoebox-size parcel. In Chicago, not all carriers are provided with mail trucks.

Johnson spends more of his workday in the station than on the street, but the street is where he finds whatever meaning his job has to offer. As he loads his mailbag for the first leg of his route, he tells me that he doesn't socialize with his co-workers. "They talk too much," he says. "They tell each other their business." Like the majority of mailmen, Johnson moonlights; he's the minister of a Protestant church. Johnson's congregation doesn't know he carries mail, and his fellow-carriers don't know he preaches. On the street, however, the old women waiting at their gates to exchange "good morning"s with him know exactly who he is. They give him letters to mail, money to buy them stamps, and news of the neighborhood. He points

"Oh, yes, indeed. We all keep a sharp eye out for those little clues that seem to whisper 'law' or 'medicine.' "

out to me a house whose owner died the previous Saturday.

It's a light mail day in a working-class neighborhood. Johnson has little but hospital bills and Walgreens flyers to feed the slots and boxes. His job is simply legwork and concentration. If he lets his mind wander—lets himself wonder whether the family at the end of the block remembered to lock up their crazy dog this morning—he forgets to deliver magazines or catalogues, which are pigeonholed separately, and he has to backtrack. His shirt darkens with sweat as we walk through the long morning shadows, through the vacancy of a residential neighborhood emptied by the morning rush hour. Children who stay home sick and writers who stay home working know this emptiness. It brings a sense of estrangement from the world, and for me that sense has always been sharpened and confirmed by the sound of a mailman's footsteps approaching and receding. To be a mailman is to inhabit this emptiness for hours, to disturb five hundred abandoned lawns, one after another. I ask Johnson to tell me the most interesting thing that has happened to him in his nine years of carrying mail. After a moment's thought, he says that nothing interesting has ever happened to him.

Perhaps the most important fact about postal work is that it's seen by those who do it as lucrative and secure. A letter carrier with six years' tenure makes better than thirty thousand dollars and can be fired only if he really messes up. Another important fact is that the work can be scary and unpleasant. The post office functions both as a springboard out of housing-project poverty and as a sanctuary for the downwardly mobile, for loners like Bartleby the Scrivener. (Melville ascribed Bartleby's emotional damage to employment at the Dead Letter Office.) Managers worry about disgruntled clerks and carriers, since many postal workers are veterans, with weapons skills; and almost everybody worries about punitive assignments—to the midnight shift, to a high-crime route, to North Dakota. The organization relies heavily on top-down military-style discipline to enforce productivity, and the flip side of this discipline is deception and resentment. There are carriers who will stop at a gas station to watch a baseball game if they can get away with it. Dope is smoked and whiskey drunk on loading docks. Farther up in the bureaucracy, the stress is undiminished and the drugs are legal: managers tell me about their prescriptions for Valium, Klonopin, Zoloft, Prozac, Paxil. I spend an evening drinking double Margaritas with three administrators who are profoundly frustrated by incompetent colleagues. They tell me that once you enter the world of postal salaries and benefits it's hard to leave, even if you hate it.

"Most people say we're overpaid and do nothing," one of them says.

"We couldn't get a job in Chicago," the second, a woman in her late forties, says. "We being with the Chicago post office? And *looking* for a job? I guess I could be a waitress somewhere. But they'd watch me very carefully."

"It's like testing positive for H.I.V.," the third tells me.

Gayle Campbell, the person who played the central role in the fall of the Chicago post office, is a captive of both the postal world and her own perfectionism. She is a lanky, handsome woman with large eyes, a communicative brow, and thick auburn hair, which she wears pinned up or in a pageboy. She has an obvious intelligence, an intensity of gesture and feeling, that can inspire devotion. The customers she has helped all characterize her as a ministering angel. Robert Pope, an interior designer, tells me, "I have not spoken to one straight shooter in the post office except Gayle Campbell. She's a rare individual, a shining light." Other admirers of Campbell, while no less enthusiastic, admit to being unsettled by her extreme degree of dedication to the Postal Service. She has

OCTOBER LIGHT

That same light by which I saw her last
Made me close my eyes now in reverie,
Remembering how she sat in the garden

With a red shawl over her shoulders
And a small book in her lap,
Once in a long while looking up

With the day's brightness on her face,
As to appraise something of utmost seriousness
She has just read at least twice,

With the sky clear and open to view,
Because the leaves had already fallen
And lay still around her two feet.

—CHARLES SIMIC

turned a processing plant upside down looking for some misdirected airline tickets. She has taken packages home to her apartment, in the Uptown district, and has got out of bed to deliver them to a customer in her lobby. There's little boundary between her work and her identity. She's married to a letter carrier. She calls herself "a mail freak."

Although Campbell's history is exceptional in its details, it fits the model of the career postal worker who, as an outsider in the larger world, finds a mission in service and a home in regimental authority. Campbell was born in Canada in 1950 and grew up in Edmonton and Moose Jaw. Culturally, she still considers herself Canadian, and she describes her ancestry as African, Irish, and Native American. In 1962, her family moved to Harvey, a small town south of Chicago, and Campbell, an excellent student, finished high school there before her sixteenth birthday. She immediately enlisted in the Army, and served in Vietnam for two years. When she was home on leave, she took the civil-service exam and scored 99.6 out of a possible 100. Immediately upon her discharge from the Army, she reported to the postmaster in Harvey. "I was a child bride of the Postal Service," she says. "It's all I know."

Campbell worked as a letter carrier for fifteen years. In 1987, she was promoted to a job in mail processing, and she began to rise rapidly. By 1991, she was a general supervisor of automation and mechanization in Chicago, with two hundred craft workers and thirteen supervisors working beneath her. Over the next year and a half she was shifted throughout the processing system as a trouble-shooter, trainer, and auditor. In the fall of 1992, however, a reorganization of the postal bureaucracy eliminated several intermediate civil-service grades in mail processing, and so appeared to preclude her further advancement. She decided to seek a slight demotion and move into delivery; her plan was to get training there, sit in an intermediate-level job for a year, and then jump back into processing at a high level. In January, 1993, she became a delivery supervisor at the Hyde Park station, on Chicago's South Side.

That winter, corporate customers of the Postal Service, including a consortium of regional banks known as the Chicago Clearing House, were lodging bitter complaints about their service. For fear of scaring customers away, the group never publicized the complaints, but they were in a state of acute distress about, among other things, the lockboxes, located in the Central Post Office, in which they received large checks from institutional and corporate investors. The Postal Service was officially committed to delivering ninety per cent of lockbox mail in the standard time. (For mail sent and delivered within the Chicago area, the standard is one day—that is, overnight. For mail sent from Seattle, the standard for Chicago delivery is three days.) By the winter of 1993, the percentage of on-time delivery to the lockboxes was in the low sixties.

Facing heat on many fronts, Ormer Rogers, Jr., the Postal Service's Great Lakes Area manager, set up an eight-member Service Improvement Team to identify breakdowns in the processing and distribution system and work aggressively to repair them. Some of Rogers' appointments were political; others reflected professional accomplishment. The latter group included Gayle Campbell, who became the de-facto leader of the team.

There was no end to the trouble she uncovered. She found carriers walking their routes with makeshift plastic tubs strapped to their carts because no one had requisitioned satchels for them. She found carriers putting undelivered mail in corner mailboxes to be collected and reprocessed. She overheard a station supervisor shouting at a customer whose post-office-box lock had been broken, "Get the fuck out of here!" She found carriers who sat in their trucks on cold days from noon to 7:30 P.M. and then returned to the station, with all their mail, to collect four hours of overtime. She went to the airmail facility at Chicago O'Hare International Airport and found that jets were being allowed to depart without their contractually specified complement of mail. She went to the NBC Tower, downtown, and found that delivery to the building consisted of steel-wheeled containers being dragged across the marble floors and sacks of mail being left where anyone could open them. She dropped test letters randomly in corner mailboxes throughout the city and kept track of when they were picked up and cancelled. Some of the letters ended up at a dead-letter office in Minneapolis.

Such findings, and the reports they generated, hardly endeared the Service Improvement Team to Chicago station managers. In October of 1993, Postmaster Jimmie Mason met with the team and urged it to tone down its reports. Instead of putting its criticisms in writing, he said, the team should endeavor to coöperate with the station managers; as outsiders, the team members didn't understand the pressures that a station manager had to contend with.

To Campbell, this sounded like a plea

for business as usual. Her life was so bound up in the post office that she considered it an extension of herself. A "dirty" post office offended her like a dirty bathroom. Instead of toning down her reports, she made them even harsher. On November 15th and 16th, during a follow-up visit to the Graceland Annex, a north-lakefront station, she listed the number of linear feet of mail that were "curtailed," or left behind, when carriers set out on their routes. Case No. 5706 had seventy-seven feet of curtailment. Other troubled sorting cases had eighty-five, a hundred, and ninety-three feet. Under Case No. 5709 the team discovered two large sacks of collected but unprocessed mail with week-old postage-meter dates. On November 17th, at the Lakeview station, Campbell found mail that had been held for vacations in July and was still awaiting delivery. At Case No. 1342 she found Priority Mail dating from October and an Internal Revenue Service communication dating from September. At Case No. 1346 she turned up General Mills cereal samples from June.

Throughout 1993, Campbell had assured irate customers that Jimmie Mason was serious about cleaning up Chicago. Tenaciously optimistic, she still believed she would get a promotion for her long workdays and for the improvements her team had produced. But either she was wrong about Mason from the start, or Chicago had changed him. In late November, according to Campbell, he promised a gathering of the city's station managers that the Service Improvement Team would be gone by year's end, and that they need not worry about further harassment.

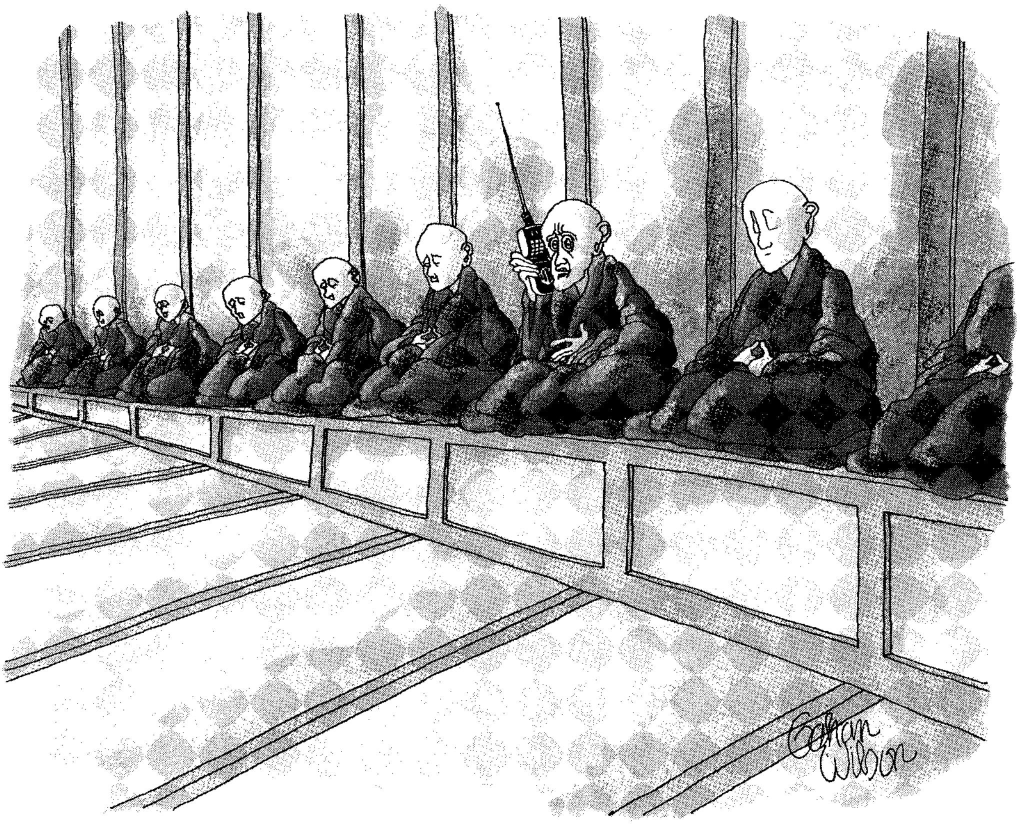
That same week, however, a man named Jerry Stevens went to the Graceland Annex to inquire about his business mail, which had failed to materialize for four straight days. Venturing briefly into a work area, he saw a mountain of curtailment. Ninety minutes after phoning a postal-complaint line, he got a call from Graceland's station manager, who apologized for his poor service and then threatened him with arrest if he ever entered the work area again. Stevens immediately called the Chicago *Sun-Times*, and their reporter Charles Nicodemus made the anecdote the nucleus of a blistering account of North Side postal complaints.

When the story appeared, on December 13th, Rogers, the Great Lakes Area manager, ordered his staff to audit the north-lakefront stations, and requested that the Postal Inspection Service carry out a parallel study. The Inspection Service is a watchdog on a long leash: it investigates everything from employee pilferage and drug use to S. & L. fraud and pornography. Having worked with the inspectors and found them trustworthy, Campbell had quietly begun to send them copies of her reports. Before Jimmie Mason could put the Service Improvement Team out of business, the chief postal inspector asked it to assist him in the audit.

When the new reports were completed, in early February of 1994, Mason met with each team member to discuss what he called their "upward mobility." Campbell told him she thought she would make a good station manager at Uptown, since it served her own neighborhood. Mason said she didn't have the proper background. He offered to make her a supervisor under the then Uptown manager, Nichols—who had been a frequent target of her criticisms. She declined. A week later, Mason returned her to Hyde Park as a delivery supervisor.

The Chicago post office first became an emblem of an institution in crisis when, in October of 1966, it suffered a nasty seizure. A backlog of ten million pieces of mail overwhelmed the huge, obsolescent Central Post Office. Railroad cars and mail trucks were gridlocked on the building's approaches. For nearly three weeks, delivery was paralyzed in the city and millions of letters and parcels headed elsewhere were delayed.

Two years later, the President's Commission on Postal Organization, known as the Kappel Commission, placed the blame for the shutdown on outmoded, poorly maintained facilities and on a variety of management problems, including a vacancy in the office of city postmaster over the previous six months, the "retirement of an unusually large number of experienced supervisors at the end of 1965," low employee morale, "a sick leave ratio double the national average," and "the lowest postal productivity



"None of this seems to be doing me any good at all!"

record in the nation." *Plus ça change:* the list is practically a point-by-point diagnosis of the Chicago postal crisis of 1994.

The Central Post Office, at 433 West Van Buren Street, now sixty-one years old, is still the largest freestanding postal facility in the country, and is a monument to all the ways in which vital information is no longer transmitted. The green waters of the south branch of the Chicago River lap against its underpinnings. Its subbasements give onto the platforms of Union Station, to which trains have all but ceased to carry mail, and the eight-lane Eisenhower Expressway punches straight through its flanks. In the quiet, cavernous lobby, brass bas-relief medallions depict five transport options that the post office had availed itself of by 1933: sailing ship, steamship, airplane, stagecoach, and railroad. A freestanding Philatelic Center now sells hummingbirds and self-adhesive squirrels and, in every shape and color, love, *love*, LOVE—the cheery abstraction that American postage commemorates like royalty.

By the end of next year, the functions of the Central Post Office will be divided between a new plant being built across the street, at a cost of a quarter of a billion dollars, and a smaller plant in the northwest corner of the city, which is beginning to come on line. For now, the old plant still processes most of the Second City's mail. At six in the evening, workers of both sexes toil in the diesel-reeking gloom of subterranean loading docks, taking plastic tubs of mail from collection trucks and sending them upstairs to the "waterfall"—a system of belts and chutes up which incoming letters must struggle like spawning salmon. A carpeted roller shunts everything unfit for automated processing (bent things, thick things, ragged things) into a hamper for special treatment. Automation and mechanization have vastly speeded mail processing since 1966, but over the same period the over-all volume of mail has more than doubled. Four-foot shrink-wrapped blocks of *TV Guide*, brute cubes of commercial matter, sit idly on pallets. Supervisors wear buttons that say "I am part of the solution." There's a backwater dustiness to the place. Sooty windows spread evening sunshine onto battered parquet floors and government-issue gray furniture. Clerks moving neither swiftly nor slowly carry trays from ingress points to egress points. The plant, because of its antiquity, is appallingly vertical. The upper-floor loading docks were designed to accommodate dray horses.

My official guide through the Chicago postal system is a sunny, petite communications specialist named Debra Hawkins. Everywhere we go inside the Central Post Office, she meets former co-workers plangent with delight at seeing her, and Hawkins is eloquent on the theme of "the postal family." She speaks of postal bowling teams, postal golf teams, postal basketball teams. "The atmosphere is very close-knit," she says. "We have individuals here with fifty-plus years of service. This is their real family. They live to come to work at the post office."

If the family works so well together, then why are Chicago's customer-satisfaction ratings so consistently low? Of the various explanations that Hawkins and other family members offer me, an impressive number implicate the public. (1) Customers don't understand that not everyone can be the first stop on a carrier's route. (2) Customers remember the one bad experience they have ever had and forget the frequent good experiences. (3) Customers move a lot, and they misuse or fail to fill out Change of Address cards. (4) Customers don't believe in apartment numbers, and often they change apartments within the same building without correcting their address. (5) Customers refuse to put their names on their mailboxes. (6) Immigrants address their mail in a foreign style. (7) With gentrification, the population on the North Side has grown more rapidly than stations can be expanded. (8) More and more people are starting home-based businesses, which add to the postal burden. (9) Customers address mail in a scrawl that automated sorters can't decipher. (10) Press coverage accentuates the negative. And anyway (11) service is just as bad in many other big cities.

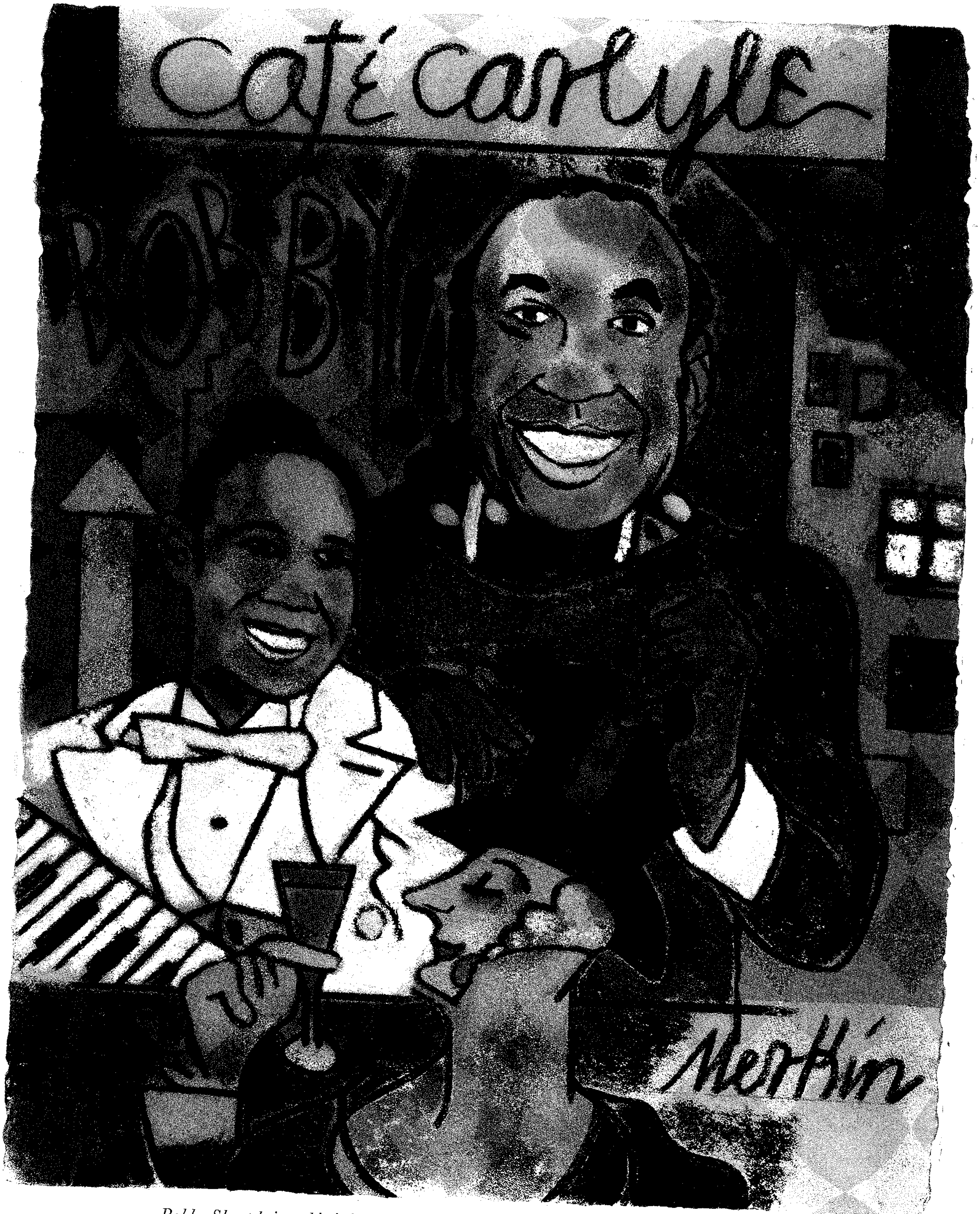
On the one hand, these explanations reflect the kind of denial—in the lingo of pop psychology—that has allowed service in Chicago to remain terrible despite the constant drumming of informed complaint. All kinds of co-dependencies can flourish in the bosom of a family under stress. Rather than admit that someone in the family is doing a very bad job, some employees of the post office will argue (Explanation No. 12) that "the people who get the most mail"—in other words, the Postal Service's most valuable customers—"complain the most."

On the other hand, some of the family's impatience with the public is justified. When I use Federal Express, I accept as a condition of business that its standardized forms must be filled out in printed letters. An E-mail address off by a single character goes nowhere. Transposing two digits in a phone number gets me somebody speaking heatedly in Portuguese. Electronic media tell you instantly when you've made an error. With the post office, you have to wait. Haven't we all at some point tested its humanity? I send friends mail addressed to Upper Molar, New York (they live in Upper Nyack), and expect a stranger to laugh and deliver it in forty-eight hours. More often than not, the stranger does. With its mission of universal service, the Postal Service is like an urban emergency room contractually obligated to accept every sore throat, pregnancy, and demented parent that comes its way. You may have to wait for hours in a dimly lit corridor. The staff may be short-tempered and dilatory. But eventually you will get treated. In the Central Post Office's nixie unit—where mail arrives that has been illegibly or incorrectly addressed—I see street numbers in the seventy thousands; impossible pairings of Zip Codes and streets; addresses without a name, without a street, or without a city; addresses that consist of the description of a building; addresses written in water-based ink that rain has blurred. Skilled nixie clerks study the orphans one at a time. Either they find a home for them or they apply that most expressive of postal markings, the vermillion finger of accusation that lays the blame squarely on you, the sender.

Not all the postal family's explanations of Chicago's woes implicate the public. There's a great deal of talk about the harsh winter of 1994 (Explanation No. 13). There's also talk about management. Debra Hawkins notes that Chicago has had seven postmasters in the last seven years, each with a different plan, and that postal executives transferred from warmer, more suburban parts of the country often lack the heart to deal with the system's problems and

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK • BY RICHARD MERKIN

SWINGING INTO TOWN


Café Carlyle
BOBBY
Merkin

Bobby Short brings his inimitable piano act home to the Café Carlyle on October 21st.

take early retirement instead. Chicago real estate is a particular headache: modernization of the city's processing facilities was delayed for years when the post office set its heart on a piece of land for which the city-planning commission had other ideas.

Finally, and most plausibly, the postal family blames Marvin Runyon's reorganization of the Postal Service. A longtime auto-company executive and a former head of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Runyon became Postmaster General in July, 1992, and immediately launched an attack on the postal bureaucracy. He announced his intention to eliminate thirty thousand "overhead" personnel, and he offered a bonus of six months' pay to any eligible employee who took retirement by October 3, 1992. The buyout offer—part of the most radical reorganization of a federal agency since Eisenhower overhauled the Pentagon—proved immensely popular. By the time all the forms were in, forty-eight thousand postal employees had taken the early out. The trouble was that only fourteen thousand of them had occupied "overhead" positions. The rest had been senior carriers, clerks, mail handlers, and postmasters.

The buyout hit Chicago particularly hard. A system as antiquated as Chicago's runs on expertise, and in late 1992 it lost fifteen hundred of its most senior employees, or nearly ten per cent of its workforce. Former processing and administrative personnel were sent to work in stations where few skilled people were available to train them. Throughout 1993, there simply weren't enough bodies to do the job. Because management could not afford to suspend anyone, it instituted a program of "paper suspensions," under which workers could receive as many as three suspensions for misconduct and still not miss a day of pay.

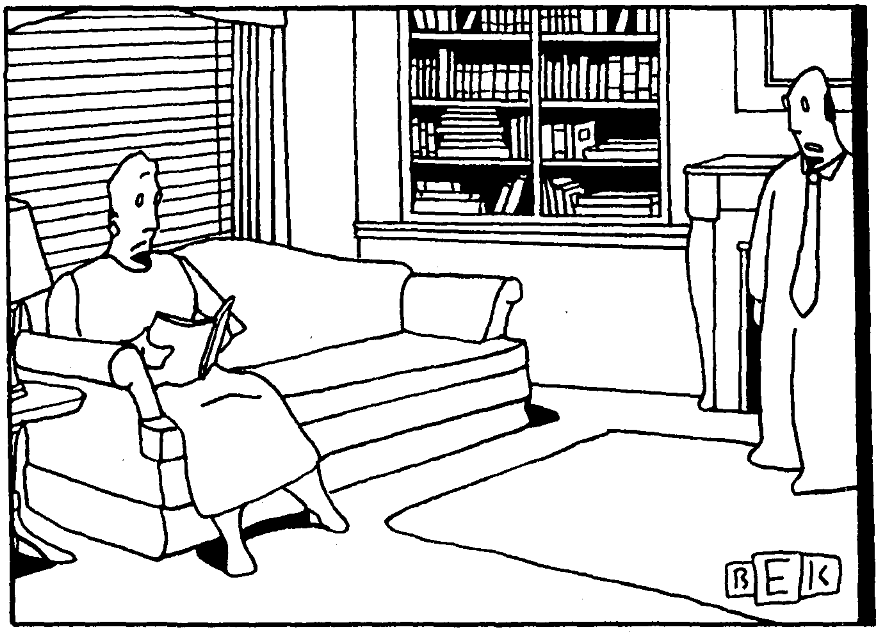
All this had a predictable effect on discipline. More subtle was the damage to morale. Without good supervision, the only reward for letter carriers who work hard and complete their routes by early afternoon—and such carriers, it should be stressed, form the majority at most stations—is to be given the leftover work of lazy co-workers. The reward for bad carriers, the ones who drink away the afternoon and finish their routes at nightfall, is overtime pay. Poor supervision produces a system of inverted incentives—a system that executives in Washington like to call "the Culture." Those postal workers who are under the sway of the Culture do as little work as they can get away with, except on alternate Thursdays. Two Thursdays a month, carriers can pick up their paychecks as soon as they complete their route, and the entire city of Chicago has its mail by early afternoon.

Erich Walch, a lifelong Chicagoan who works in Evanston, is one of many carriers for whom service is its own reward. Walch believes that Postal Service management fails to appreciate the intelligence and hard work of dedicated carriers. He says that's why the frustration level among them is so high. "A lot of people get to the point where they say, 'I have done everything I can, so I'm going to do less. I will take out only first- and second-class mail. I will take out maybe an extra one or two bulk-rate letters. And I'll walk real slow. And there's always tomorrow.' "

Station managers, for their part, complain that cumbersome labor agreements and obstructionist unions prevent them from enforcing discipline. This view is contested by union officials, including Walch (he's an assistant steward), who insist that managers are simply too lazy or uninformed or snowed under with paperwork to follow the rules. Indeed, the supposed adversarial relationship between supervisors and unions has the aspect of a convenient myth. The unions provide managers with an excuse for their failure to manage, which, in turn, enhances union power at a station; productivity falls through the cracks.

The Culture pervades the bureaucracy as well. Administrators in Chicago, an amazingly demoralized lot, still lament the incompetence of the managers who came to power under the 1992 reorganization. Most Postal Service employees believe career advancement to be tainted by favoritism; and although nepotism is seldom flagrant, the Chicago post office is quite literally a family, an extended family of aunts, uncles, brothers-in-law, and girlfriends. One upper-level administrator tells me, "The people who've been promoted above us we've been asked by management to train." Another propounds the theory that in assigning senior-management positions headquarters dug up the candidates' psychological profiles and chose the ones with the scariest records. "And made phone calls to those people. And put them in charge."

This particular administrator, in despair over her boss's stupidity, recently bought a straw voodoo doll from a vender in the Haitian community in Rogers Park. She paid ten dollars extra to have the doll cursed in her boss's name. The doll came with three pearl-headed hatpins, with which she pierced its head, heart, and stomach. The following morning, her office was abuzz with the news that her boss was being transferred out of Chicago. Not long after the transfer,



"Let's drive up to New England and watch the leaves die."

he was struck by a serious illness of an undisclosed nature.

"Charlotte! Can't healing take some other form?"

• •

EARLY in the morning on February 4th, in the parking lot of the Lakeview station, on Irving Park Road, the postal family's dysfunction bore spectacular fruit. A letter carrier who couldn't start his truck opened the truck of a co-worker, Carrier 1345, for a jump start. In the rear cargo area he found a hundred sacks of undelivered mail—what turned out to be forty thousand one hundred pieces in all, with four hundred and eighty-four different addresses. The oldest envelopes bore postmarks from December.

Word of the discovery reached Gayle Campbell when postal inspectors asked the Service Improvement Team to count the contents of the sacks. (They did it mechanically, with optical character readers.) She was bitterly unsurprised by Carrier 1345's malfeasance. In a November report she had cited him as a poor worker who habitually curtailed his mail, and it was obvious that nothing had been done in the meantime to improve his performance. Now she decided to pass the information on to someone who might actually use it.

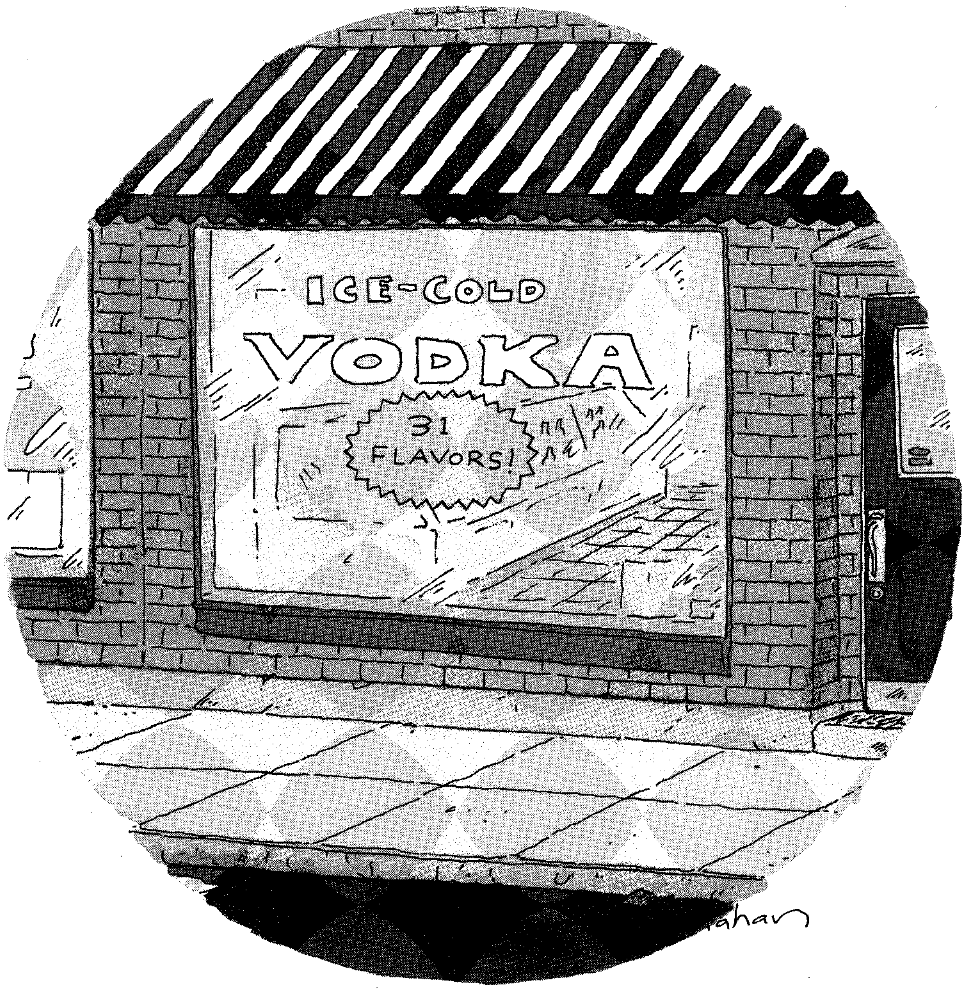
The person she chose was Charles Nicodemus. Since his December *Sun-Times* article appeared, Chicagoans had been bombarding the newspaper's offices with postal anecdotes, but the newspaper didn't have enough hard news to pursue a follow-up. Then, on January 21st, Nicodemus got a call from Alderman Patrick O'Connor. O'Connor said that one of his constituents—Debra Doyle—had been speaking to a postal worker who was willing to tell stories and name names. Nicodemus had leaped at the chance to cultivate Gayle Campbell.

When Nicodemus tried to confirm the story of Carrier 1345, the post office lied to him repeatedly. Even after the *Sun-Times* ran the first of three stories on the incident, postal spokesmen continued to deny, for nearly a full day, that the sacks of mail had been discovered accidentally. These lies, along with the news that Chicago's postal-customer-satisfaction index had dropped to a then all-time low of sixty-four per cent, led the *Sun-Times*, on February 20th, to run an editorial calling for the removal of Jimmie Mason.

By the time the editorial appeared, Campbell had returned to Hyde Park. But even as she began to work with Nicodemus, she'd kept hoping that Ormer Rogers, the regional manager, would be as appalled as she was by his staff's reports. Her final disillusionment occurred when she went to the Ashburn station, in southwest Chicago, to attend an all-city delivery-management meeting in late February. The main floor of the station was a chin-high sea of mail. "I opened the door and I said, '*God*, this is not a post office, it's a *warehouse*,' " she says. On the way to the second floor, Ormer Rogers, fifty station managers, and more than two hundred supervisors waded through the mail without remark, as if it didn't exist. "I knew then that I was working for the wrong ones," Campbell says. "I knew then that they were not serious about improving anything." Despairing, she gave Nicodemus the final reports on the audits that Rogers had commissioned in December. The reports produced a *Sun-Times* cover on March 2nd ("POSTAL PROBES FIND A MESS") and a string of rich follow-ups: eight hundred linear feet of mail going nowhere at the Lincoln Park station; supervisors tolerating drug and alcohol use by workers during working hours; a service-improvement team silenced and disbanded.

Campbell also faxed a copy of the team's final report to the Washington office of Senator Paul Simon, who had heard about her from Patrick O'Connor. Simon and his fellow Illinois senator, Carol Moseley-Braun, sent a joint letter to Marvin Runyon urging him to visit Chicago personally. Runyon, afraid of walking into a hornets' nest, refused. Simon then called him at his home, in Nashville (Runyon commutes by jet to Washington), and persuaded him to reconsider. Runyon dispatched his second-in-command, chief operating officer Joseph R. Caraveo, along with two other national vice-presidents, to prepare the way for his own visit.

On the Friday before Runyon's visit, in one of those "accidents" that fuel paranoid conspiracy theories, twenty thou-



sand pieces of mail bearing dates between 1979 and 1992 turned up in garbage cans behind a house in southwest Chicago; the retired carrier who had owned the house confessed that because he was unable to finish his route on time he had habitually taken his work home with him. On that same Friday, the police found a two-hundred-pound pile of fresh mail burning in a walkway beneath a rail viaduct. The guilty carrier, Darnesia Bullock, later explained that, with Caraveo conducting inspections throughout the city, carriers had been under intense pressure not to leave mail behind in stations. The walkway had presented itself to her as a logical repository. Bullock conjectured that homeless people had set fire to the mail.

The city was in a fractious mood when Runyon arrived. His visit culminated in a "town meeting" at the Broadway Armory, in the Uptown district. Officially, the meeting was a City Council Finance Committee hearing on the economic impact of poor mail service. Runyon, Mason, and the Chicago mail-processing director, Celestine Green, sat at a table with the air of defendants at a war-crimes tribunal, facing an ocean of accusers and a sprinkling of defenders. While members of the Progressive Labor Party passed out flyers demanding eight hours' pay for six hours' work, Runyon offered his apologies to Chicago and promised to send in a task force to clean things up. Witnesses at the open mikes told caustic jokes and sang derisive songs. Marilyn Katz articulated her frustration, and Debra Doyle related a sound-bite-size story of missing gas bills—one that was rebroadcast on TV for months afterward.

After Runyon left Chicago, a twenty-seven-member task force of skilled managers from around the country arrived to continue the work of the unthanked and largely unpromoted Service Improvement Team. Familiar promises were made as if for the first time, and media attention waned temporarily. But Jimmie Mason's days as postmaster were numbered. On April 25th, Van H. Seagraves, the publisher of the *Business Mailers Review*, broke the story that Celestine Green had spent two hundred thousand dollars of maintenance funds to refurbish her office suite with hardwood kitchen cabinets, a marble bathroom, and an air-conditioner for each of the suite's seven windows. Rumor has it that word of the renovation quite literally leaked out when water from Green's whirlpool bath came through the ceiling of the express-mail unit, two floors down. What made things worse was that by the end of 1995 the entire Central Post Office was to be vacated. Green's misjudgment was so egregious that her superiors in Washington had no choice but to remove her. While they were at it, on May 3rd they removed Ormer Rogers and Jimmie Mason. This being the Postal Service, it was all done gently. Although Rogers received a demotion, none of the executives took a cut in pay or benefits. Rogers was sent to Kansas City, Mason to South Carolina, and Green to the southern suburbs of Chicago, where her husband is the plant manager.

With Runyon's task force at work in Chicago and the top managers gone, the cloud of fallout drifted eastward, toward Washington. At congressional hearings held in early June, members of the board of postal governors—the Presidentially appointed overseers of the Postal Service—expressed contrition and anger. Marvin Runyon announced yet another reorganization of the postal hierarchy, reuniting Delivery with Processing, divisions that he'd divorced in 1992. The reorganization drew fire from Representative William L. Clay, who noted that only one of ten new regional vice-presidents was black, and it apparently exhausted the patience of one postal governor, Robert Setrakian, who privately called on his fellow-governors to remove Runyon before the Postal Service fell apart altogether. The sense of crisis deepened in July, when the Washington *Post* reported that postal inspectors had found millions of pieces of mail in four trailers at a processing plant in suburban Maryland, which was unable or unwilling to do its daily job.

In each of these events, the fall of the

Chicago post office resonated. When Debra Doyle met Gayle Campbell, the boundary between two worlds had been breached. Doyle had brought Campbell to Nicodemus, who in turn opened the postal world to the Chicago public; with the arrival of Marvin Runyon from Washington, and "Eye to Eye with Connie Chung" from New York, it became inevitable that heads would roll.

A coda to the fall was provided on Saturday, May 7th, when firefighters responding to an electrical fire in a condominium in Palatine Township, a northwestern suburb of Chicago, found their access to the attic blocked by a wall of letters and parcels in the master-bedroom closet. A stray bundle of mail fell on a fireman's foot; it bore addresses on the North Side of Chicago. The haul consisted of three thousand three hundred and ninety-six pieces of first-class mail (including one Visa card taken from its envelope but never signed or used), eleven hundred and thirty-eight pieces of second-class mail, three hundred and sixty-four pounds of bulk business mail, and eleven hundred and thirty-six compact disks. The condominium belonged to Robert K. Beverly, a seven-year veteran letter carrier attached to Chicago's Irving Park station, who began taking mail home with him in his used Jaguar for fear of being disciplined for not completing his route. What's mystifying about this story is that no one on his route is known to have complained about missing mail. His arrest took the Irving Park station completely by surprise.

The postal family tells me that the incident was an anomaly. It calls Beverly a bad apple or a sicko, his actions an indication of nothing but the darkness in his own heart. The family says the clustering of bad apples in Chicago this spring was adventitious. Publicity from one discovery led to others. Many of the misdeeds that came to light were unfresh. Things are no different in any other city.

When I recite these excuses to Gayle Campbell, she shakes her head grimly, like the hanging judge she is. She says that in a Service Improvement Team report in 1993 she flagged Beverly's route as "a troubled case," littered with old mail. She believes that there are other, undiscovered Robert Beverlys in Chicago. Having interviewed Beverly's foreman ("the most lackadaisical, unconcerned gentleman I've ever met") and the Irving Park station manager, she is able to explain the mysterious lack of complaints. "There were complaints," she says. "But I know they didn't keep a complaint log, because I gigged them for that. They didn't have one complaint log for me. I addressed that issue. When I visited, they had their feet up on the desk and they were talking about the ballgame. There were twenty people outside waiting to be serviced and two clerks at the windows."

THAT systemic failures could persist for decades in the primary communication network for one of the country's largest cities and financial centers, and that it took the combined impact of a maverick administrator, media attention, and a congressional delegation to force the system to address those failures, raises serious questions about the long-term viability of both the United States Postal Service and United States cities.

Five years after the Chicago crisis of 1966, the old Post Office Department was reorganized as the United States Postal Service, a federally owned "corporation" over which Congress and the President had oversight but no direct control. The Kappel Commission had concluded that only by operating as a self-supporting business could the Post Office become flexible enough to survive in the modern world. Congress and the President lost the power of political patronage at the post office, but they also lost the burden of running it and covering its deficits. Instead of taking the heat when the public complained about rates or service, they could join in the criticism.

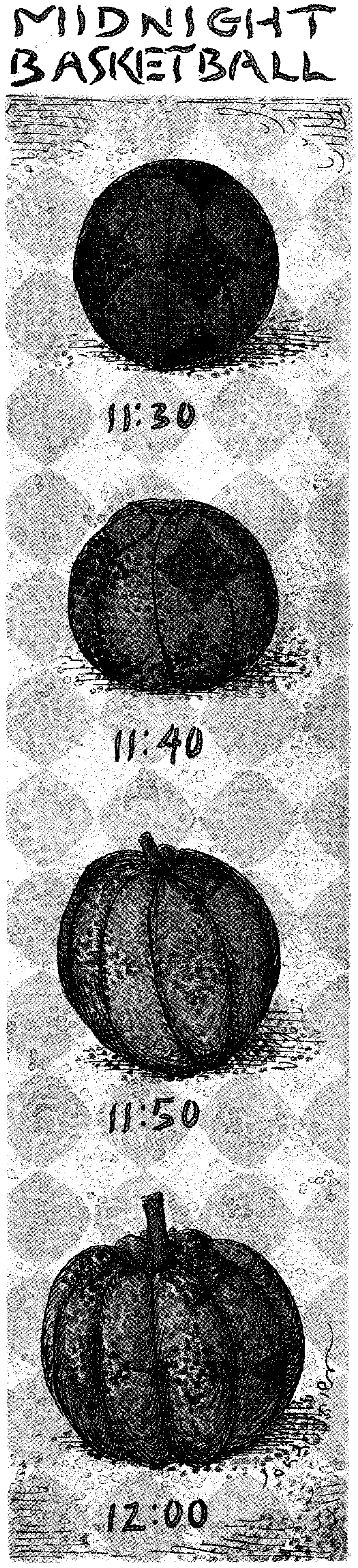
The Chicago postal crisis of 1994 shows the results of this policy. The inhabitants of large cities are now, more than ever, second-class citizens. It's poignant to see an old congressman like Sidney Yates, who came to Washington with Truman, shake his head with nostalgia for the days of patronage. The Postmaster Generalship used to be the plum awarded to the national chairman of the President's party, and until 1971 all big-city postmasters were political appointees. If your mail service was bad, you could talk to your ward boss and get action. By the early nineties, as Yates discovered, you could talk to the Postmaster General himself and get nothing. With fifteen thousand employees, the Chicago post office was still a political power base, handing out applications for jobs the way precinct captains once handed out pounds of bacon; but it

THE NINES

Thus we proclaim our fond affirmatives:
I will, I do, Amen, Hear! Hear!, Let's
eat, drink, and be merry. Marriage is
the public spectacle of private parts:
checkbooks and genitals, housewares, faint hearts,
all doubts becalmed by kissing aunts, a priest's
safe homily, those tinkling glasses
tightening those ties that truly bind
us together forever, dressed to the nines.

Darling, I reckon maybe thirty years,
given our ages and expectancies.
Barring the tragic or untimely, say,
ten thousand mornings, ten thousand evenings,
please God, ten thousand moistened nights like this,
when, mindless of these vows, our opposites,
nonetheless, attract. Thus, love's subtractions:
the timeless from the ordinary times—
nine thousand, nine hundred, ninety-nine.

—THOMAS LYNCH



served no master except itself. The same reorganization that protected postmasters from political harassment, and allowed craft employees to aspire to high postal office, now effectively isolated a city post office from its constituents.

In Chicago, machine politics has given way to racial politics. It escapes public comment but not private observation that unrest among white North Side postal customers began not long after Chicago got its first black postmaster, and that black postmasters have presided over increasingly strident complaints ever since. Earlier in the century, postal work was one of the few respectable careers open to educated African-Americans—Cross Damon, the main character in Richard Wright's "The Outsider," has Sartrean dialogues with three co-workers from 433 West Van Buren Street—and it remains a primary way out for poor inner-city blacks. By the late seventies, when much of the white middle class had withdrawn to the suburbs, the Chicago post office was predominantly black. The figure today is nearly ninety per cent.

Many of the problems at a station like Uptown—rampant absenteeism, rapid turnover of employees, poor morale—are aggravated by its distance from the black South Side neighborhoods where most postal workers live. Workers with tenure quickly transfer to more convenient neighborhoods. The same is true of supervisors and managers, who have been known to refer to Uptown as Siberia. The result is a perpetually inexperienced North Side workforce.

Race shaped the crisis in more fundamental ways as well. The north-lakefront stations were perceived as "troubled" because the volume of complaints was so high. In fact, other stations in Chicago were equally badly managed, but residents in poor neighborhoods either worked all day or expected little in the mail besides welfare or social-security checks. On the North Side, there were self-employed people and people of leisure who noticed when the mail came late and when they missed a week of *Wall Street Journals*. The North Side had expectations. It had learned, in the decades of the Daley machine, how to organize and how to complain. But now the rules had changed. The post office, though it looked like a city service and had once behaved like a city service, was not accountable.

In May, after the transfer of Mason, Rogers, and Green—all of them African-American—the Chicago chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., noting that two of the three replacements were white and that Thomas Ranft, Green's white boss, had survived the shakeup, denounced the moves as racist. The denunciation was specious in its implication that the thousands of dedicated black postal workers in Chicago owed their jobs to skin color rather than to competence. But it illuminated, behind the post office's long reluctance to admit its shortcomings, the fear of losing black control. Gayle Campbell says that what made her a "traitor" was less her public betrayal of the postal family than the fact that she had, in the words of one manager, "brought the white man in." The white men she brought in were not only William Good and David Fields, who replaced Rogers and Green, and white politicians, like Simon and Smith and Yates, but the white media establishment, which many American blacks and almost all Chicago postal workers believe to be biased against them.

In his first months in office, Rufus F. Porter, the new postmaster, has eschewed the rhetoric of family, preferring the corporate vocabulary of "initiative" and "communication" and "the entrepreneurial spirit." Porter, forty-six, is a native Californian, a onetime mail handler who earned a master's degree at night school. Visiting him on the fourth floor of the Central Post Office, I see why Celestine Green, whose bureaucratic rank was equivalent to Jimmie Mason's, felt the need to redecorate. The Chicago postmaster's office is a sprawling veldt of deep-pile carpeting with scattered settlements of heavy, carved furniture. Porter, a stocky man with strikingly erect posture, sits on the edge of a chair with his hands folded on an enormous boardroom table. He answers my questions in the clipped, forceful cadences of a cadet being drilled. "You can't teach initiative," he says. "But what you can do is create an atmosphere, an environment, where people can feel empowered. And that's what we're attempting to do. We're trying to create that atmosphere."

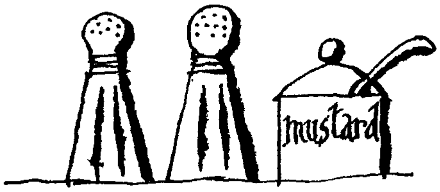
By most accounts, Porter is succeeding. He has removed precisely the faulty managers whom Gayle Campbell targeted in her reports, reinstituted disciplinary suspensions, and shown a willingness to spend whatever it takes to improve service in Chicago. Postal executives frustrated by their superiors may stick pins in straw dolls; but the transfer of a nonperforming administrator probably owes less to the power of voodoo than to Porter's determination as a reformer. Even the uncompromising Campbell is a convert. "He's the one that Chicago's been waiting for," she says. "We won't be the last for long."

SIMPLY not to be the worst anymore: it's an aspiration whose modesty must temper the optimism that Porter's efforts inspire. When I ask Frank Brennan, a national Postal Service spokesman, why cities like Chicago have been neglected for so long, he speaks of his organization's historical association with "small-town America," where a community's identity and connection to the republic were wrapped up in its little post office. Big cities, Brennan says, are part of an "evolving America," where the daily personal connections that define the postal mission are far less workable. Viewed in this way, the neglect of the Chicago post office shows itself to be part of a larger pattern of federal frustration with cities. William Henderson, the Postal Service's new chief operating officer, says, "There's no subject in a major American city that's not difficult to tackle, and the post office is one of them." Henderson believes that high population densities, in the form of traffic jams and high-rises, inevitably impede the flow of surface mail. "It's just a fact we face. Everybody is annoyed about it, and we're annoyed, too."

The urban impediments aren't only logistical. In the early eighties, when a long-repressed urban minority gained control of the post office, many of its members were understandably less interested in attacking the deep structural problems they had inherited than in acquiring (like Celestine Green) the trappings of power long enjoyed by the old ruling faction. At the root of the troubles of the Chicago post office is the gap between the two tiers of American society, which is nowhere more visible than in big cities, and which is bridged nowadays by little but the universal Postal Service. Maximal wealth and cutting-edge technology exist side by side with a second- and third-generation urban underclass for which employment at the post office may seem less a responsibility than an extension of its federally funded entitlements. Angry as Campbell was at the postal management's betrayal of the public, she was no less angry at its betrayal of the city's entry-level workers. "They *want* instruction," she says. "They *want* guidance. But if you've got somebody who's back there in the office sucking on a cup of coffee and talking on the phone to Janie in the next station, you're not going to get that production."

However much big cities vex the Postal Service, they still generate the high volume of mail that pays for universal service. If they are structurally doomed to slower delivery, as Henderson suggests, then something has to suffer—either the cities or the Postal Service. And it's clear that the cities are suffering already. By subtracting from the quality of life and adding to the cost of doing business, poor mail service helps drive corporations and affluent individuals to the suburbs. It's a process that dismays committed city dwellers, like Marilyn Katz. "To me," Katz says, "cities are the lifeblood of culture, the lifeblood of democracy, because they're one of the few places where you really have an integration of different kinds of people. One of the things that's happened, as society has become more stratified, is that in almost every realm of public service cities have become second-class citizens. The Postal Service works in Wilmette. It doesn't work in Chicago."

The Postal Service, for its part, is not harmed by the flight to Wilmette. What does pose a threat is virtual flight, the flight to alternative information-delivery systems. Business-to-business correspondence, which the Postal Service estimates has diminished by a third in the last five years, is where the impact of faxes and E-mail is most visible. So far, this loss has been offset by a robust flow of first- and third-class advertising mail. And boosters of the Postal Service, like William Henderson, sound confident that its usefulness will survive the development of the national information infrastructure that Vice-President Gore so warmly heralds. "Mail is the most interactive product in the United States today," Henderson says. "You can put a letter in your pocket, read it anywhere. It's the ultimate in interactivity."



The problem is that the Postal Service need not lose much business to run into serious trouble. In his first appearance before Congress, in 1992, Marvin Runyon described how rising postal rates had already driven third-class advertisers to alternative forms of delivery, like television, or flyers hung from doorknobs. "As we increase our rates, the Postal Service will be privatized by outside sources," Runyon said. "Not by us but by outside sources."

Because of its commitment to universal service, the Postal Service has large fixed infrastructure costs. It can't shrink and grow like an ordinary company. For this reason, the information superhighway won't have to render it obsolete outright in order to throw it into crisis. The highway need merely exist as an increasingly attractive alternative. If enough mailers, private and corporate, begin to use it, an economic thunderstorm of upward-spiralling rates and downward-spiralling service and mail volume will ensue. When this happens, Congress will have two choices: either subsidize or privatize. Returning to federal subsidy of postal rates would require an honest admission that universal flat-rate service is an expensive ideal; it would cost taxpayers money. The possibility exists, therefore, that the Postal Service will be privatized, with lucrative markets like Wilmette and the Chicago Loop being sold off to the highest bidder, and the post office remaining as an underfunded rump, a carrier of last resort, serving only the rural and urban poor.

AT two-thirty on a humid summer afternoon, I drive west from the Loop on a superhighway. While staying in the city, I haven't spent more than twenty-five minutes travelling to an appointment, either on the El or on foot. On the national transportation infrastructure, however, by maneuvering aggressively, I reach the city limits in just under an hour. Traffic in the suburbs is no better. Cars stretch bumper to bumper into the distance on roads that are being widened even as we drive on them. Only at my destination, a new mail-processing plant in Carol Stream, have the industrial parks and condos halted, momentarily, their advance across the cornfields.

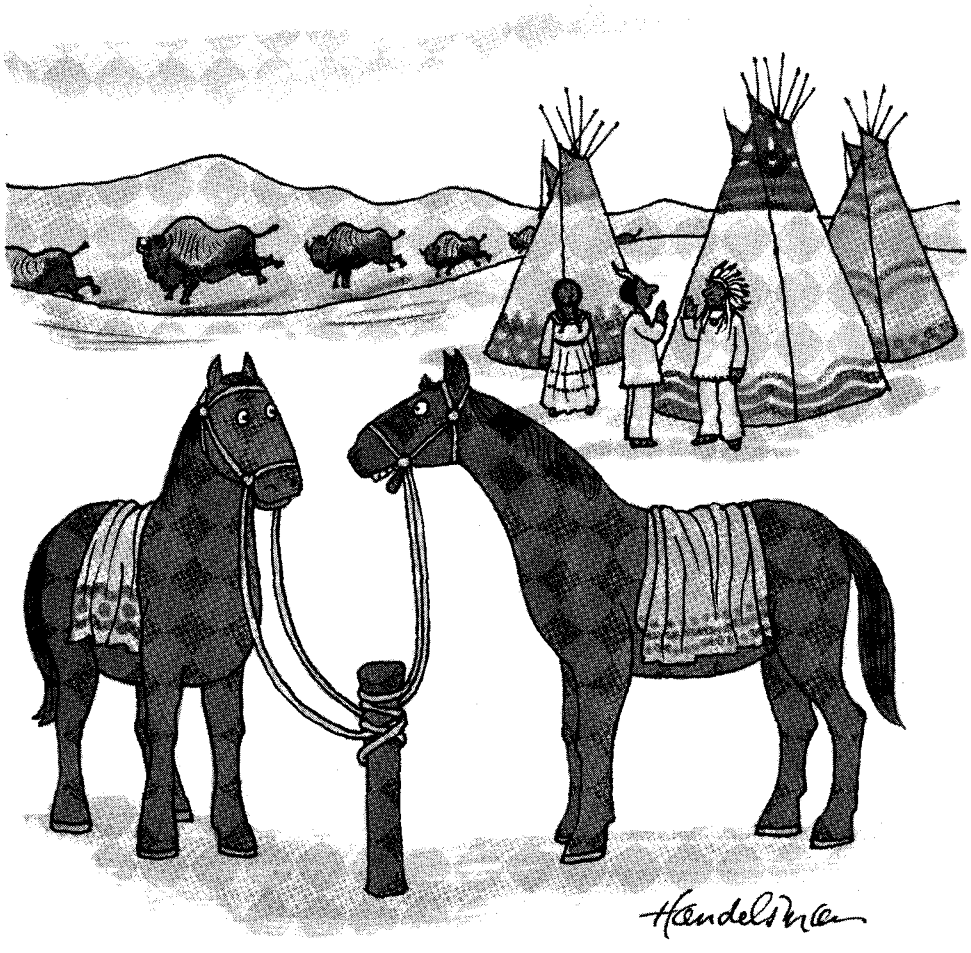
The Postal Service's hopes of survival are pinned on growth. In order to avoid an upward rate spiral, losses in the volume of personal communication must be offset by gains in business-to-household mailings. Already, in the United States one in five advertising dollars is spent on direct mailing, and William Henderson believes that the figure will increase as companies further realize the potential of sending out advertisements in envelopes that contain bills or masquerade as bills. He's particularly excited about the recent proliferation of credit cards.

To keep pace with rising volume, the Postal Service of the future will have to be further automated, and at Carol Stream full automation is close to being a reality. The plant is a technological showcase, with conveyor belts and hoppers and pathways, all painted in gumball colors, and a control room on whose friendly video screens you need only touch an interesting node with your finger and it interacts with you. There are machines that shuffle and reshuffle envelopes into the order in which a carrier delivers them. There's a machine that sprays a phosphorescent bar code on the back of a hand-addressed letter and transmits a video image of the address to Knoxville, Tennessee, where workers read and key in Zip Codes, which are then beamed back to Carol Stream and applied to the front of the envelopes in the form of a black bar code. There's a din from facer-cancellers, from optical character-readers, from letter-sorting machines, from passing motorized mule trains, from hook belts and flat-sorters and delivery bar-code sorters; but it's a level din, a supportive din. The only product of this plant is order. The substance to which order is brought is predominantly white. It conforms agreeably to friction belts and robotic claspers. It floats, it whispers. It's called the mail stream, and, unlike the mail at Chicago's Central Post Office, it has no discernible personality. I'm absurdly pleased when I discover, in a small-parcel sack labelled "Nixie," a solitary padded mailer, somewhat torn, that is addressed to a pouch number in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, and bears a return address of Uncertain, Texas.

Leaving Carol Stream, I drive past soy fields and a beverage distributor. At the end of a strip mall thirty-seven hundred feet long and one store thick, I happen on K's Mail Center, a bright, clean outfit that offers not only mailboxes and United States stamps but also a notary service, plain-paper faxing, desktop publishing, key duplication, wrapping paper, and humorous greeting cards. The proprietor, a personable Nigerian immigrant named Chris Kator, keeps long business hours and provides every imaginable shipping service. Kator tells me he acquired his franchise because of the synergy among the services he offers, the opportunities for growth. He says that he has no complaints with the Postal Service, but that few of his customers choose it for sending packages.

In the air-conditioned cool of Kator's store, amid unhumming beige equipment in its Powr Savr mode, the march toward privatization—toward a fragmented republic of terrific bargains and unconscionable gougings—seems irresistible. So does the idea that the place to which Americans should go to participate directly in the system that governs them is not a small-town post office with Old Glory in its lobby but an exurban retail outlet with Day-Glo banners ("We Sell Beepers") in its plate-glass window.

Back in the city, however, after another unpleasant superhighway experience, I succumb to nostalgia. I think of the delight with which Alderman Mary Ann Smith describes a Christmas card, "with a gold-foil envelope and a gold-stamped return address," that a former alderman sent her from prison. I think of my own delight when I discover that before Debra Hawkins became a communications specialist she was a clerk in the Central Post Office who sorted mail for the neighborhood of Pilsen, and so may have personally handled the letters I sent to my brother in his apartment there. I think of the Evanston carrier, Erich Walch,



"I am not Crazy Horse! Crazy Horse is a man. I'm Fred."

"You don't look anything like your pictures."

who says that the customers on his new route all hated their ex-mailman and therefore hated him. "It took over a year for some of these people to look at me as a human being, to not grunt when I said good morning to them, but I've changed their perceptions," he says. I think of the old Polish-American women who stand on their porches and break into smiles as they take envelopes from the hand of the African-American carrier who is also, in his other life, a minister. I think of the mail piling up for me at home in Philadelphia, and I feel a keen anticipation.

What makes the sight of a person in postal uniform a welcome one is not simply the possibility that he is bringing us a billet-doux or a sweepstakes check. It's the hope and faith that the Postal Service *serves* us. Ever since it came by stage rider to remote Appalachian settlements, the U.S. Mail has offered to a lonely people a universal laying-on of human hands. It's as sacred as anything gets in this country. The burning of mail under a viaduct deals the same blow to our innocence as the pederasty of priests; and as soon as a sacrament is administered only virtually, in the manner of televised evangelism, it reduces celebrants to consumers. Of all the Chicagoans I've spoken with, not even the most despairing has suggested that the Postal Service be dismantled.

On August 1st, Rufus Porter granted Gayle Campbell's long-standing request to be transferred from the Hyde Park station. She is now coördinator of the External First-Class Measurement Team. When Campbell told her doctor what the job entailed—monitoring the pickup and delivery of first-class mail—he said, "They're trying to kill you." She recently paid two hundred and seventy-eight dollars of her own money to a Kelly girl who entered measurement data for a day, and when even this didn't satisfy her she got up at two in the morning to enter data herself in a notebook computer. "If I don't do it," she says, "who will?"

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Campbell and I differ on what's killing her. As the actual victim, she looks for agents: she sees an evil alliance of deceptive managers and arrogant unions who are trashing her ideal of customer service. I see a woman whose work is her life. I also see an economic system killing the city that Campbell lives in—the very city that invented the modern commodities market. Chicago's post office is a relic of an older system of responsibilities, from which its own management in Washington is scrambling to distance itself. To survive in the corporatized world, the Postal Service now aspires to be just another medium—to be the same efficient collector of consumer dollars and transmitter of products that the information highway (for all its champions' pious talk of "nonlinearity" and "pluralism") is going to be. If the political economy of our fin de siècle doesn't dismantle the Postal Service from without, it will steal its soul from within. The attachment of Americans to their post office is pure nostalgia. It's the double vision of a people whose hearts don't like what their desires have created.

When I finally get back to Philadelphia, two inches of mail is waiting for me at home. William Henderson will be pleased to know that I've received four separate credit-card solicitations, each forwarded promptly and at no extra cost from one of my previous addresses. There are also bulk mailings from representatives whom I personally did not elect, bills for the credit cards I already have, four issues of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, whose yellow forwarding stickers remind me to "Notify Sender of New Address," a large envelope with Ed McMahon's face on it, three meaty Val-Paks, which I'm certain hold interesting offers of discount carpet shampooing and bonus pizzas at Little Caesars, and a solitary first-class letter from a friend of mine in England. Although he must have sent it weeks ago, I tear it open urgently. He asks me why I haven't written. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

TRANSLATING BRANDO

Why is Marlon Brando different from all other stars? He changed everything he touched—acting, sex, class, and postwar American maleness—even if no two people can quite agree on how.

BY HAROLD BRODKEY

THE Marlon Brando who appeared on a special ninety-minute edition of "Larry King Live" last week is the Brando we have come to expect: overweight, vulgar, and boring, and then abruptly passionate and intelligent, with his youthful face gleaming in all the fat. King was deferential, but he wasn't spared Brando's antics. Brando mocked his host for sweating under the lights, and at one point even tweaked King's nose. He kept propping his puffy bare feet on an ottoman in full view of the camera. And at the end of the program, ever the Godfather, he kissed King on the lips—a Mafia gesture indicating that a suitor has behaved well and is accepted into the gang.

Was Brando disgusting? Mostly, yes. But the screen clips of his finest moments that were dropped in before and after commercial breaks during the program said more about him than he did himself. When Brando first emerged as a star, in the late forties, it was amazing how instantly many theatregoers and critics and people in the theatre recognized the way he had of existing in the present moment. Except in the case of the occasional comedian (Buster Keaton, say, physically, though not, of course, in speech), this hadn't been seen before.

Brando's mumbling was said to be "real," as if the impetus to speak were occurring then and there and had not been written in a script. His brutish explosions of anger, his displays of vanity onstage were seen by pretentious and unpretentious reviewers alike as having an immediacy new to the theatre. And although many critics complained, the public acclamation and the box-office draw were noticeable at once.

More openly than movie-acting or book reading, theatre presents a series of moments in some kind of sequence. The moments are real enough as performance, but their degree of reality in giving us the scenes of a story—the degree and kind of stylization of the story—forms most of what is called acting. The pursuit of reality, the self-conscious attempt at realism, was more than a century old when Brando first appeared; from Balzac to Einstein you can draw a fairly clear line. Brando, Norman Mailer (whom Pauline Kael links to Brando in a well-known review of "Last Tango in Paris"), Leonard Bernstein (whose musicals were *real*), Richard Avedon, and countless others—John Berryman, for instance, and Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, and Paul Taylor—all emerged at roughly the same time, and all of them, with various lacks or deficiencies and various skills and abilities, worked within a frame of extreme realism. You could say they worked counter to modernism. Of these artists, Brando was the most directly perceived by the public—the most fully *welcomed* and perhaps the most influential.

Brando has written a four-hundred-and-eighty-six-page autobiography entitled "Brando: Songs My Mother Taught Me" (Random House; $25), with the help of a writer, Robert Lindsey. On "Larry King," Brando stated that he had been paid an advance of five million dollars for the book, which he kept calling "an exercise in freedom." Almost simultaneously, a third-person tell-all biography entitled simply "Brando" (Hyperion; $29.95), which is more than a thousand pages long and was written by Peter Manso, has come out. Unfortunately, Manso's book is unreadable except in short bursts. Manso, in my opinion, has no sensible view of Brando. But he has a great deal of largely unexamined information, much of which is grim and unsettling.

Brando's own book is readable, and for someone my age who has been affected by his work it is often gripping—although it is obviously self-serving and in every respect that I have any knowledge of seems factually misleading. But let's call it a lie, for it is clearly a performance, which Manso's book is not. Brando is an actor and has lied for a living all his life—lied and presented a simulacrum of truth. It is widely held that he was "truthful" in his work. He seems to dislike acting now—because of the human elements, the immediacy, the slipperiness of effect. People say of Brando that he seems to have experienced a living death—that his life was a horror. His book says that this is not so.

Still, the more Brando lied, the more he conveyed a sensation of truth. Stanislavsky, the Russian theoretician of acting, who was Chekhov's director, uses the idea of translation to suggest the process by which you transform something in yourself into stage effect and aesthetic truth. (To act using yourself is very different from trying to talk about yourself to an analyst, but it is not so different from writing about yourself.) Brando was taught by Stella Adler, who studied briefly with Stanislavsky, and by Elia Kazan, who was influenced by Stanislavsky.

It is difficult to talk about Brando's stage performances, because they varied from night to night, and nobody saw every one of them. Looking back, one can easily guess that he was interruptible—that his performances were infinitely

Marlon Brando in 1947, on the Broadway set of "A Streetcar Named Desire." The questionable morality of Brando's art was new. So were his eyes.

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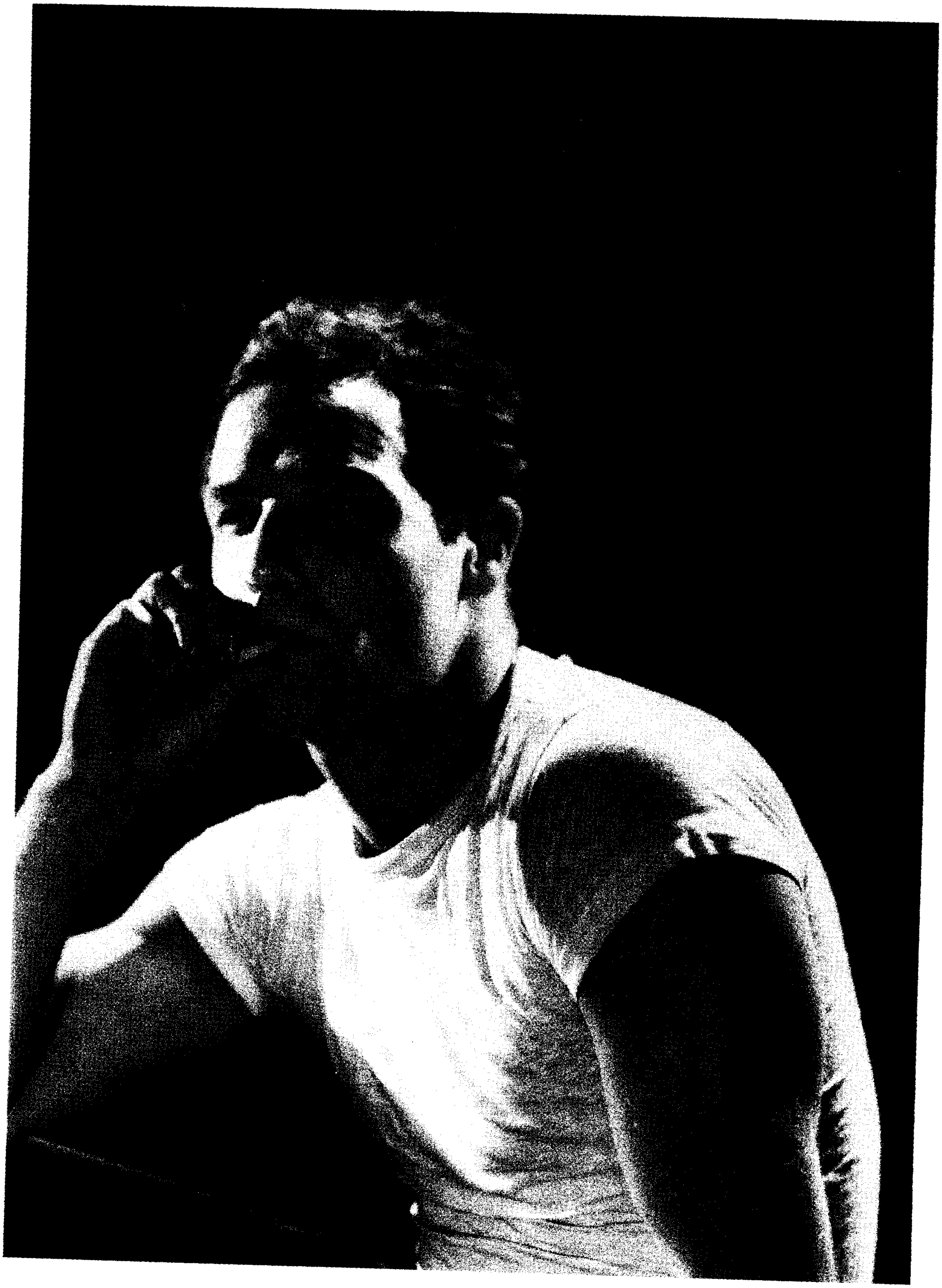


fragile. They were like translations in progress. My memory is that in the late forties, when I was in college, and the gossip about Brando had started, some of the comment was about how tricky or erratic he was in his full glory. And opera singers and musicians—with singular exceptions, such as Glenn Gould—were entering a period when they were like workhorses. Richard Tucker and Zinka Milanov and Birgit Nilsson gave and were said to give "rousing" performances, whatever their mood.

Brando was a scene-stealer and was strong-willed and ruthless beyond belief, but he was never a horse. Either the performance flickered with inspiration or he was merely sexy. Every once in a while, Brando would do a final or over-all translation of a role—always flawed but classic. And, like Philip Roth, he asserted that he was *playing a role.* But to me it seemed that Brando was only playing himself, in an autobiographical epic about an American soul. And, either because of his Celtic background—he is largely Irish, he says—or for some other, intangible reason, he seemed from the start to be doomed to go to hell, unrescuable. Brando worked from himself, as all actors do, but he did it differently. He took something homeless and naked from Tennessee Williams' plays (Brando, who is seventy, hasn't yet done a Eugene O'Neill play) and from the very air and reality around him, and though it can be said that he is telling the truth when he claims that his acting is not autobiographical, in some deep, resonant way it is, because of the degree of improvisation in it and the disrespect for all that has been done in acting before him.

The way his book is put together suggests that he is somewhat talented as a writer but a bit wild. And the movement in language toward a coherent argument—the melody line of meaning—is beyond him. Perhaps in acting you have to be raw but veiled at the same time, but he can't manage this for long on paper.

In his book, which jogs one's memory of him much more than the Manso book does, the first and last thing one feels—feels with surprise—is that he seems to have almost always existed as the lone figure in the universe, despite his having a family, his not being an orphan. He *says* he was an orphan in some sense, and I believe him. He was the pure and barbaric new solipsist, who existed—even in a performance, even in the part of a story that is beyond words—above and to one side and behind and below the words. He was pictures and text, a temporal animal, so clever that he seems demonic while remaining at least semi-irresistible—and not passively so. He was not an adorable self sitting still. He was as active and energetic as Puck.

I see myself in Brando's book, and that is natural, since he was the first male star to emerge in my adult life (when I was eighteen). Brando taught me something about maleness; it is the man's world that Brando's good work treats and embodies. His father, Brando says, liked hookers. He was a hard drinker (though not as serious a drinker as Brando's mother, who was an alcoholic), and seems likely to have been abusive. In one of the semi-autobiographical improvisations in "Last Tango," Brando tells a stock anecdote of a son humiliated by his father. The tale involves cow manure being on Brando's shoes at a party because his father made him milk a cow when he, Brando, was already dressed to go out. We can guess at the son's rabid and contemptuous ambition to escape from humiliation into the topmost stratospherics of triumph—to become the greatest of all time, as it were. But Brando can act certain things that he cannot write about clearly. At one point, he says, "The power and influence of a movie star is curious: I didn't ask for it or take it; people *gave* it to me"—as if such fame were possible without some desire on his part. The mixture of truth and not-truth, the shock to a reader who accepts the gesture of a statement that cannot be true, recurs over and over in the book. Though Brando did not finish high school, he has always claimed to have read widely and with some care. But his performances are not brainy—are not primarily even verbal. He says he is intuitive or "mostly" intuitive. So why is he playing at being a brainy person?

Did Brando ever play an intellectual? Was he ever in a movie that had an intellectual in it? Could he have done George in Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf"? Could he do Prospero now? He did an extremely famous semi-intellectual movie, "Last Tango in Paris," and he did a self-consciously political intellectual movie, "Burn!" And he was far from out of place or clumsy in either one. What was frightening (for me) was a vampire quality he had in those roles, as if he were feeding his performances with bits of flesh and mind ripped from the directors of them. This borrowing or stealing parts of developed selves, often with malice or cruelty, is also boyish-childish, semi-adorable—which is what an orphan learns to be in order to gain shelter. And if I say that what Brando ripped off was mostly faults and rottennesses; if I say that his characterizations (or translations) are mostly junk assemblages, I am placing him among the fifties talents, among the artists. Brando lays this out without actually saying it: Brando is a kind of junk figure—worthless, he says. (He cheats on that by being politically active, by doing good. But good in this world is usually tainted.)

Part of Brando's persona as an actor is that he is a swindler and a rapist and a bully (of a certain kind), a murderer, a madman. He says these are characters. That is, these are not traits of one central figure. The liar who tells the truth *in a way*, while being a real man, was the standard role for actors in this country in the thirties, before Brando. Brando wasn't the first of the new generation of actors. Montgomery Clift was. (He offered sensitivity and a profile in someone middle-class; he was a kind of American Leslie Howard.) But the morality of Clift's characters was never in doubt. Nor were their manners. Brando's questionable morality and the questionable morality of his art, its graffiti quality, its shitting-on-you wildness: all this was new. And so were Brando's eyes: clever, androgynous, hauntingly threatening eyes, somehow also soft and weak, satyr / American-stormtrooper eyes (though they are less famous than his profile). He seems to have worn glasses at one point. His hair was darkened for "A Streetcar Named Desire." For most of his career, he had the same makeup man do his hair and his skin. As early as the movie version of "Streetcar" (1951), he was notorious for having too fat a can. (Clift, when he wanted to dispraise a performance of Brando's, said he had noticed Brando's fat ass—meaning that the actor Brando wasn't being magical.)

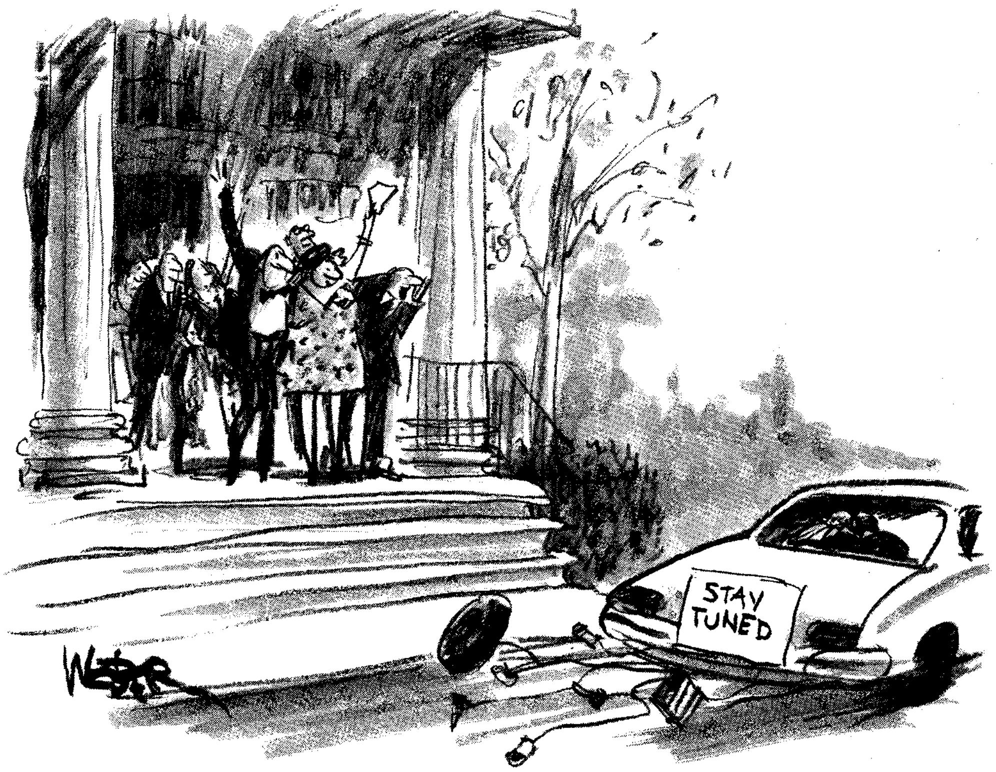
For me, Brando is a self-invented, one-character actor who does the separate selves in himself as characters. He was in many ways a kind of unknown soldier—not dead but dead-souled, as a result of the Second World War. Tennessee Williams, according to a letter printed in Brando's book, saw this quality in Brando from the start. Williams wrote Audrey Wood, his agent:

> I can't tell you what a relief it is that we have found such a God-sent Stanley in Brando. . . . It humanizes the character of Stanley in that it becomes the brutality or callousness of youth rather than a vicious older man. . . . A new value came out of Brando's reading which was by far the best reading I have ever heard. He seemed to have already created a dimensional character, of the sort that the war has produced among young veterans.

Brando says that on the famous visit he made to Williams to read for the part he did not sleep with Williams. People in New York thought he had. Williams continued to see Brando in terms of incarnation and reincarnation—the soldier-Orpheus, for instance—and most of his plays after "Streetcar" seem to me to have parts written for Brando, but Brando never acted in another Williams play. (He did do the film "The Fugitive Kind," Williams' adaptation of his play "Orpheus Descending.")

The American-spiritual, or national, quality in Brando—his representing someone we were indebted to, his new take on the working-class father of the country—was a very important cultural invention. This serviceman quality lasted as long as Brando could project sexuality, and then he became a post-Bogart hard guy who never had a chance and yet was hugely triumphant—Superman *père* and the Godfather and Kurtz in his kingdom.

FOR people who saw Brando in anything he did when he was young, the overwhelming first effect he created was one of sexual presence. The fifties were supposedly not a highly sexual time. Yet Brando and Mitchum and Russell and Bardot flourished then—odd precursors of the sexual revolution of the sixties. Was it the war that brought these people to a boil and then brought them forward? Brando had worked with Katharine Cornell and Tallulah Bankhead by the time he appeared in "Streetcar." He is not very talkative in his memoir, but both of those women were bisexual and they were romantic presences of a considerable sort—Cornell regally and Bankhead temperamentally—and he says he reacted positively to neither of them. I say he absorbed their quality, masculinized it slightly, dirtied it, and went a bit out of control with it. Elizabeth Taylor, in "Reflections in a Golden Eye" (1967), attempted a portrayal of sexuality, but she is a pretentious junior harridan in comparison with Brando,



"What was it like, nabbing Reds?"

who is playing a frustrated and murderous repressed-homosexual major—God, the story lines back then!

I am not discussing Brando's androgyny. I take androgyny for granted in everyone. But Brando took over the vanity and posing and sheer willfulness of a good-looking woman and developed a deconstructed version—an anti-version of a diva's romantic sexuality. He gave it a male twist, using the rigorously male energy of his director Elia Kazan. Kazan, a much better director of men than of women, was a bitter, potent, philandering man—and this found marvellous expression in Brando, who could actually embody those qualities physically, in glances and posture and walk. Brando became—in a sense, in part—a surrogate Kazan. And there you have the sexual icon that dominated the stage and screen and the imagination for twenty years. In "On the Waterfront," Brando added a weird—and weirdly beautiful—other element: a quality of being a hero-victim, a sacrifice.

It was because of Kazan that most of the ingredients of Brando's force as an actor were without class bias, class identity. It is not clear if Kazan knew how much of him Brando was putting onstage. From the beginning, Brando's theatrical persona was meant to be responsive to everything and everyone, was promiscuous.

Promiscuity has dimensions of self-loss and of addiction and of "Arabian Nights" storytelling; it whispers of a story constantly renewed. The image of promiscuity as noble and fated (as dirty but real) still has power in the militantly homosexual community and among some practitioners of S. & M. and some literary critics. Brando presented this image openly and head on. To say metaphorically that Brando's mischief fathered later rebellions—Elvis and the Stones, gay liberation, and "Black is beautiful"—is to indicate some of the abiding power of that youthful work of his, or, if nothing else, how accidents of the spirit of the age favored Brando. (I prefer the idea that Brando was a great inventor.)

By the time he made the movie version of "Streetcar," Brando, as I said before, was fat in the rear. In an interview with Truman Capote, published in this magazine in 1957, he said about his sudden success that one morning he "woke up . . . sitting on a pile of candy." A punitive sexual quality hovers over Brando's image as he ages, in "One-Eyed Jacks" and, especially, in the sequence in "Last Tango" which involves anal sex.

Despite the plot of "Last Tango," which for most viewers, I would guess, has no interest whatsoever, the movie is something like "Der Rosenkavalier" for the sexiest male star of his day. Pauline Kael, in her review, seems to have announced a truth obliquely: that Brando *coming apart with age and decay*, like Brando obese and dying, would still be a star attraction, would be one of the wonders of the time. Surely this is in part the point of the movie—that Brando can play a man his own age as if he had had a lifetime to prepare for it.

Kael once drew a distinction between tall actors, like Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper, and the noticeably short ones, like Brando and Cagney. She argues that the tall actors hide in goodness in order to shrink themselves, but the small ones are nasty. Perhaps for short men sexuality is more likely to be represented by competitive promiscuity. Short men are more overtly violent because they feel cheated. Kael doesn't say that tall actors make an effort to reduce the menace, while short ones crank it up, but that, I think, is one way to understand Brando: he was less menacing because of his size and was allowed or encouraged to be more menacing, to be the heroic-demonic short guy, an heir of Cagney.

Brando is not said to be or to have been sexually fake. People who claim to have known him don't derogate him sexually. In the fifties, certain women had sexual rank because they'd had Marlon, and they told you—they offered themselves tantalizingly in that manner. The quotes in Manso's book about Brando's sexual performance are mostly concerned with his sensitivity and with his actual physical touch. In the movie "Streetcar," there is an astounding closeup of Brando as Stanley, when he is struggling to take Vivien Leigh in an act of rape, and his face is that of a satyr. It is a brilliant piece of work—but perhaps inept for a moment of rape. His look suggests malice and danger but not violence and control, not physical control. It seemed to me he was saying in facial gesture *I know you* or *I have you.* In his later movies, he does not claim this sexual authority.

Brando and Manso both suggest that Brando likes control, likes the feeling of webbing or enshrouding another mind. He seems to have escaped from a childhood in which he was out of control and too pretty and without education—escaped into a sense of empowerment that is, after all, contingent, and ultimately unsatisfying to him.

Brando *was* pretty. Then his nose was broken in a bout of boxing with a stagehand during the run of “Streetcar,” and that made him beautiful. Slightly different versions of the anecdote are printed in Brando's book and in Manso's. Irene Selznick, who produced “Streetcar,” told me that Brando had been hard to light—he had been too pretty for the part of Stanley.

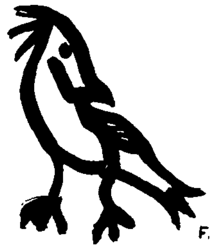
She also said that he was undisciplinable onstage after the first weeks of the show, and that that had frightened her. Brando's way of being fully involved onstage had a Zen quality, mixed with an obvious narcissism and touches of lunacy and cruelty. Everything he ever did had an element of mockery. Selznick said that Brando hated Jessica Tandy, but so did the audience, at times. Selznick said the play was magical. She became concerned about possible litigation, because Williams' contract did not permit anyone to make changes in the script. She dragged him to the theatre to see what Brando was doing in the part. Williams wasn't bothered at all. “Leave him alone,” he said, according to Selznick. “The audiences like him. The money is good. The play will be printed and saved—if it can be.”

Selznick denied having discovered Brando. She gave the credit to Kazan and Williams. The text of “Streetcar” before Kazan and Brando altered its meaning represented a kind of social reality and aspiration that she understood. She disliked Brando, the androgynous and sensitive lower-class or classless brute—the actor without tradition, without old-fashioned glamour or chivalrous responses. He was so talented and so strange and so inward that he seemed to be a mythological creation. After establishing Brando, Kazan worked with other male dreamboats, including Tim Everett, James Dean, and Warren Beatty. But, in the odd way that things turn out, they were considered to be offshoots of Brando, not of Kazan's direction.

Whether Brando did or didn't have an initial innocence (it seems he didn't), he was a blatant exhibitionist, and not a democrat but a star—not only a peasant but a great figure. And once he had become a looming icon on the screen he received an unnatural amount of attention. Anyone interested in the contemporary world will probably buy or borrow the two Brando books and a number of videos and will take a look at the phenomenon. Brando is not like any other star. Clint Eastwood and Greta Garbo are similar to each other as movie presences—Eastwood is as postcoital as Garbo in manner, and as cranky and as melancholy—and Monroe resembles Mae West, combined with W. C. Fields and Shirley Temple. But no one is like Brando. For example, Eastwood is committed to action, while Brando is condemned to it.

Brando in his early movies is an unforgettable face atop a semi-inflated, loosely disciplined body. I don't know how important he has been. Jack Nicholson conveys a post-Brando sheer nuttiness about the demonism of sexuality and self-importance, often ironically, and so does Sharon Stone, in another style. And, once I start thinking about it, I see Robert Lowell as Brandoized, and I see John Irving and Nureyev and Montserrat Caballé and Maria Callas as Brandoized, too.

No one greatly helped his or her own career by appearing in a movie with Brando. In “The Missouri Breaks,” an Arthur Penn movie of the seventies, Brando in a dress, a transvestite, was the most sadistic and most feared killer in the West. It is a very strange take on the American Western. And it does not explain itself. Penn uses Nicholson to represent comparative goodness, and the movie does not recover from that mistake: it should be about shades and variants of evil. But instead it is unsentimental where Brando is concerned, and sentimental at the core.



OUR acceptance of the senseless, operatic, dreamlike Oz of the movies doesn't mean we are cheated by them. But, even with all the power of movie illusionism to help him, Brando never seems to *love*—not in “Sayonara” or “Reflections” or “On the Waterfront.” That absence of love in him was part of the teasing sharpness of projection he had—part of the icon. It is doubtful whether Brando was capable of portraying love, or even obsession, onscreen—brutal or not, with a man or a woman. Though he hints at but denies solitude, Brando is magnificently obscene as someone alone, a sort of embodied will taken from his own daydreams and played onscreen and then abducted by the world.

The Manso book details various aspects of this. Brando mentions it in his book but doesn't give accounts or examples. Between the two books, we are left with a sense of a man who earned between fifty and a hundred million dollars, much of which was stolen or lost. A man who slept with a couple of thousand women, perhaps several thousand, and with a hidden number of men. A man considered the best actor of his time. In his case, the Dorothy-in-Oz thing of being a movie star is a concomitant of an unclassical and pragmatic narcissism, an emotional isolation. In his book he seems to be saying that his triumph occurred among artificial creatures—that other people were fabulously unreal and meant little to him. In his life he seems to have found more reality among people of another culture, people less successful, or among the other sex—among women as sensitive, mad-for-him bimbos. He seems to have seen other people as unenlightened.

The maybe innocent inability or unwillingness to project any real feeling or desire toward anyone else becomes in Brando's work a kind of sadism mixed with masochism. He explores this in “One-Eyed Jacks”—a bad movie with a great many insights in it. The worldwide romance with Brando was clearly an S. & M. business—as it was with Bardot. For me, the resonance of his popularity is always there, in any consideration of his art or of his purposes. After Brando's success came, it was not clear whether his isolation was a sophisticated sense of the world, a form of heroism, a screen fantasy of male independence (the inevitable result of talent, stardom, and intelligence), or a cry for help.

Brando may have been emotionally

recalcitrant, but he was not recalcitrant material as an actor. He was a supreme technician, and was superb as a director's surrogate—just as he was superb as our surrogate. It was also clear that he was morally-amorally one of the mass, a mass-man. This contradiction was never resolved in his movies or by those who wrote about him. Bertolucci saw it, but I doubt whether he actually directed Brando. Bertolucci is not a mass-man, and he made the mistake of casting Brando in "Last Tango" as an expatriate in Paris who is down on his luck.

In that movie, Brando presents sexual failure as the failure of life to have meaning, as the sexual failure of *capitalism.* He ate the subject up and spat it out—a socialist, vanity-struck Dorothy in the sexual Oz of the postwar world. But his defiance and pride are not those of an expatriate failure. The betrayals by women and the bestiality of women are presented belligerently in Brando's performance. Brando parades guilt, dissatisfaction, and a sort of infantile sadism—a tantrum of resistance to his own masochism, perhaps—and he does grand-but-grungy soliloquies, but what I see is an extraordinarily powerful personality being punitive and suicidal because it is *time,* because the biological clock is running out for him. The movie consists of scenes as self-conscious as the musical numbers in "An American in Paris." But what survives in memory as the dominating image is the aging and enraged Brando.

I THINK Brando failed to be a defeated expatriate—failed even to be defeated by age—in "Last Tango," just as he is undefeated in his so-called autobiography. He emerges as undefeated even in Manso's assault on him. Brando's book is full of present-tense moments and of long-term sweeping remarks. He is trying to hide himself in a performance separated from theatrical time and sequence, and he succeeds. Brando says in his book that he likes to talk, but he gives no examples. Manso doesn't, either. He relies on Capote's interview with Brando. Most of the meanings Manso suggests for Brando's actions and most of the interpretations he offers of Brando's character are hinted at in the Capote interview (which he quotes substantially): the self-involvement, the self-created royalty, the tinge of ignorance. But the interview itself seems dated.

The traits ascribed to Brando can be ascribed to Garbo, too—and to Alice Faye, for that matter. Even Myrna Loy was accused of them. It is possible to argue that the older Brando's performances consisted largely of a world-weariness, a cold irony or disillusion that was perceptibly asexual or anti-sexual—a contemptuousness toward sex that you found in some of those women stars.

With Brando it is also possible that meaning is derived from a faded Catholicism and is genuinely hellish. Evil rules the planet. But Brando is ambiguously dark, since a suspect optimism and utopianism appear in him and in his work. Like most other fifties figures, Brando spent enormous amounts of time in analysis, but Brando Faustianly chose to be the father of a largely unverbal dogma. Brando in a movie, as onstage, inserts bits of business, cadenzas that express, nonverbally or in clumsy speeches, his own theories and views of life. Brando as a god? Control of the screen by men makes them figures of sexual fantasy. One might argue that Brando exists most successfully in the realm of the lively hallucinations that accompany sex, the tales one tells oneself to make fucking work or while masturbating.

Power in an aging man is a valid image—as valid as the loss of power. Brando with jowls and tough, slightly crazed eyes became an image of money and power and pained and eroding self-satisfaction.

I NEVER knew Brando. But one time, in New York, my agent and Irene Selznick arranged adjoining house seats for Brando and me at "The Entertainer." Laurence Olivier was terrific in a tiresome piece of work about the collapse of the British Empire. ("*Who cares?*" I muttered.) As a seedy music-hall entertainer, Olivier put on a superbly interesting performance. Brando, beautifully dressed, was hunched down in his seat and gave an impression of startling tininess—not that he was so tiny, but he had a colossal power of projection, which worked even at close range. His hands were small. He had a Baryshnikov-like authority, but a very different sort of masculinity—less noble and more impish.

He did not laugh or breathe or applaud in any way that drew attention. He watched and studied, and occasionally he and I looked at each other. My wife then, Joanna Brown, did not like Brando's work, and she paid little or no attention to him. In his book Brando says that Olivier did not "play down" in terms of accent. He meant that Olivier did not directly act out social class. But no one had before Brando. And that wasn't the issue with Olivier; the issue was the fourth wall, was self-consciousness at being a performer. Wonderful as Olivier was, his performance was a glorified *reading,* not an embodiment. But, I repeat, it was wonderful.

"It's not hammy," I said to Brando, with a kind of amazement, at intermission. People had gathered in sufficient numbers in both aisles so that it looked too difficult to make a try for the lobby and a cigarette.

"No. It's really good work," Brando said, in the most educated and class-ridden and modest way you can imagine.

"He really hates it," I muttered to my wife, on the other side of me, and she said, "I do, too."

The crowds inched forward. Certain brash or enamored souls led the way. Suddenly they were all around us. But it was a polite crowd, a theatre crowd. Brando gave autographs and responded to compliments and was not mocking.

He said to me, "I'm sorry about this."

When the bell sounded to signal the end of intermission, Brando said to the gathered crowd, "We don't want to hold up the play." The crowd then mostly scattered. A few people went on staring and sighing at him. He sighed, too, and hunched down. The lights went off, and Brando scrunched in his seat and became tininess itself again.

At the end, he said, "I wouldn't do it this way." Which was kind of obvious. Olivier not only played directly to the audience but used British theatrical culture as a context and kept the characterization at a sliding distance, entering it more fully sometimes than at other times. At no moment did he stop being Olivier doing a music-hall turn. I have never been more *entertained* in the theatre, and I said that to Brando. I said I was knocked out. "But it's a stupid play," I said.

He said, "Yeah"—meaning, as far as I could tell, that the play had no truth in his and my sense. (I say "my" because I was influenced by him.) The play was meant to have tidy language that rose to symbolic truth and poetry. But this was overmatched by Olivier's crass poetry of stardom. He gave a great performance, of a nakedly seductive sort. "I will tell him he's wonderful, and I will mean it," Brando said, sighing very heavily, as the autograph seekers and admirers gathered again.

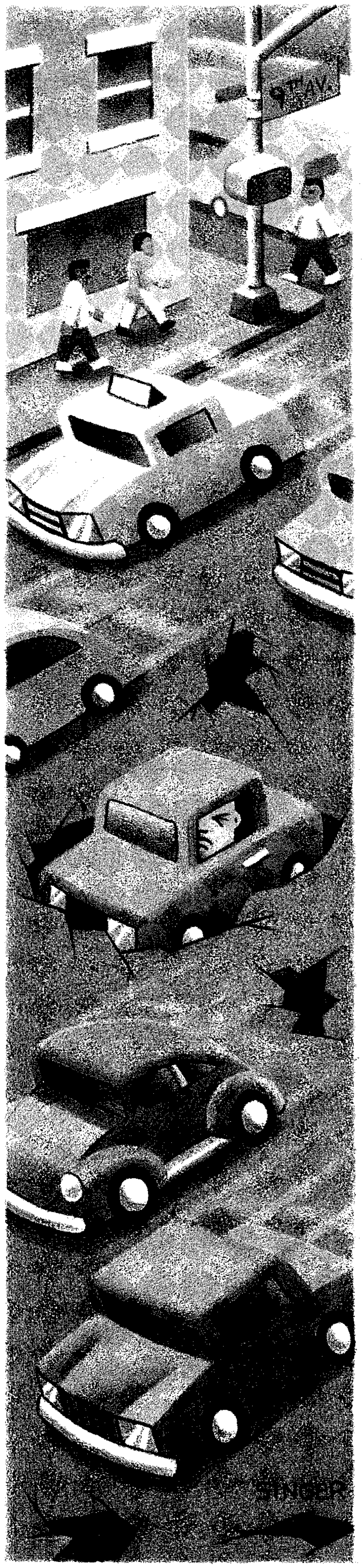
OLIVIER, around the end of his playing actively sexual men onscreen, co-starred in "The Prince and the Showgirl" (1958) with Marilyn Monroe, the woman who was the measure of fifties male sexuality. The combination was a curious one. What Olivier knew about sexual attraction and what Monroe knew about it did not match up. Monroe knew nothing—or, rather, cared nothing—about consequences. She seemed to be far wilder than Brando. She was Miss Unafraid, Miss Un-Freud, a free woman. Both she and Olivier used a subtext of humiliation in their acting. (Olivier's Heathcliff, his Maxim de Winter, his Henry V, his Richard III, and his Archie Rice have that British poetry of humiliation and subordination.) Monroe used the good cheer in the face of degradation which she projected in the comedies she did. She never showed that she hated humiliation.

Brando usually did show that he hated it. He complained of the humiliation in being an actor. His rage, unlike Olivier's and Monroe's, was not beneath the skin; it was clearly visible on the surface. The ambiguous Olivier, with his vast technical resources and intelligence, made filigrees out of male humiliation. Monroe was monstrous with wet-lipped satisfaction and as-if-low I.Q. and with delight—with her own sort of playing for keeps. Just as Brando did with his co-stars and directors, she humiliated Olivier, wiped him off the screen. (What an odd Dorothy *she* would have made.) Most of the pleasure of the movie is in her dominance over Olivier's intelligent talent, over greatness, over perceptible culture. Brando was a similar construct onscreen. It may spring from innate humiliation, this relentlessness. (The reason for it in Brando is not clear from either book. In the Manso he is judged to be a demon. In his autobiography he presents himself as someone perennially young who was not empowered by youth. That can't be true, can it?)

To use Monroe to see Brando is not eccentric. Monroe in "Some Like It Hot" played a mostly bright-tempered gold-digger, a woman who was imprisoned in her sexual persona and freed from sexual pressure at the same time, who was self-hugged and flauntingly open—who needed no one and accepted everyone. This description could easily be applied to Brando. Monroe was jollier on the surface than he, but there was the same devouring thing in both of them. I imagine that people they went to bed with didn't have to be sexual; Brando and Monroe would be sexual for them. A man *became* sexual, plugging into Monroe's unjudgmental, priestess-of-sexual-gluttony welcome. It hardly mattered what any man's sexual lacks or merits were. What mattered was her magic. So, too, with Brando.

For me, Brando is a point at which definitions begin. He is one of the basic tautologies of our age. If you ask people to talk about him as a performer, the most common response you are likely to get is *Brando is Brando.* He seems nowadays to be more admired as an artist by men than by women. But he has been a force for equality, for miscegenation of all sorts.

When Brando lost his sexual vanity and his power of sexual suggestion, everything changed for him, but he has kept on going in a kind of loony autobiographical momentum. As an old man Brando seems a bit automatic: not manipulative so much as still automatically vivid, still automatically irresistible. (Genuinely so; I do not mean this ironically.) I suppose he is trying too hard, with death being so near. Everyone around him—parents and wives and lovers—has robbed him of money and pride, or tried to. His autobiography is intelligent, and, as I said, the more he lies the more a sense of truth emerges. The lifelong performance on his part of very strange notions of rage and self-pity and pity for others, of absolution for the male at the soldier level and absolution for himself, continues in his book and will continue, it is clear, until he dies. ♦



FICTION

ZOMBIE

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

MY name is Q.P., and I am twenty-nine years old, three months.

I see my probation officer, Mr. T., Thursdays, 10 A.M., and my therapist, Dr. E., Mondays and Thursdays, 4:30 P.M.; my group-therapy session with Dr. B. is Tuesdays, 7-8:30 P.M.

I am a registered student at Dale County Business College, where I am enrolled in two three-credit courses for the spring semester: Introduction to Accounting and Computer Graphics.

My residence is 118 Church Street, Mount Vernon, Michigan. Which is close by the State University campus. Seven miles from Dale but no inconvenience for me, I have my van.

I drive everywhere in my Ford van. It is a 1987 model, no longer new but reliable. My American-flag decal in the rear window.

At 118 Church Street I am caretaker for a rental property. The house is a tall, narrow red-brick Victorian with a smudged look like somebody moved his thumb across it. It is three stories high, with an attic and a deep cellar with a stone foundation, in which, at the front, the date 1892 is chiselled.

University students rent our rooms.

As caretaker of the property, I live in the ground floor rear, because that is most convenient. The stairs to the cellar are close by, and nobody can get to them except by passing my door. My tools and equipment and workbench are in the cellar.

But I have access to all the floors, of course. Because I am caretaker. And I am grateful for this. My master key will open the door to any room in the house.

Most of the students who rent with us are foreign students from India, China, Pakistan, Africa. Often they have trouble with their locks at first, so I am called upon to help. And am always obliging, though speaking no more than is necessary. And making no eye contact.

All the houses on Church Street are old, spacious Victorians. They used to be single-family residences. Now they're rooming houses like ours, or office buildings.

"Q.P. Caretaker" is neatly printed on a small white card beside my door. I printed it myself in black ink.

LAST night I was working late in the cellar, repairing seepage damage in the cistern. I am a hard worker once I get started, and lose track of time. I did not require sleep (I did not take my 10 P.M. medication) and so sometime in the middle of the night I climbed to the attic and looked out the window at the night sky where there was a moon so bright it hurt my eyes! Shreds of cloud being blown across the moon clotted and cobwebbed like angry thoughts.

So shameful, Dad said.

But now we are going to turn over a new leaf aren't we son.

My father is a distinguished physicist at the university. I know it has been upsetting to him to learn certain things about his only son and to have these things a matter of public record. *How does your client plead*? Judge L. asked, and my lawyer said, *Your Honor, my client pleads guilty.*

In my heart I did not plead guilty, because I was not guilty and am not. But it was a racial matter, too. The boy is black and Q.P. is white, what can you do?—so my lawyer counselled me.

But I am on good terms with the family again. This is a relief to me. I have told them how sorry I am that I have hurt them. And how much it means to me that they trust me. *I will live up to your trust from now on*, I told them.

It is hard for me to hug them! Especially Dad. There is a stiffness in all our bones. But I do it, and I believe I am doing it correctly. Mom and Big Sis were crying, and there was a stinging moisture in my eyes.

When Judge L. pronounced, *Two years*, there was a long moment when my heart stopped before he added, *Suspended sentence*. His eyes, which I had no choice (my lawyer counselled me) but to look at, reflected severity but also kindness.

Judge L. is known to Dad, and Dad is known to Judge L. Mount Vernon is not a small city, but important men know one another here as elsewhere, I believe.

Afterward Dad shook my hand so hard it hurt and did embrace me, and there were tears in his eyes behind his glasses. *Now we are all going to turn over a new leaf.*

You get to the attic by steep stairs at the rear of the third-floor corridor. I made my way silently in wool socks not wishing to wake up the young Pakistani graduate student whose room is almost under the stairs.

Ramid would not be a safe specimen. Or any of them beneath this roof. I never think of it.

In the attic there was a strong, sharp smell of dust and that sweetish-sour odor of dead mice. I inhaled deeply, shining my flashlight into the attic's corners. Shadows leap like bats. When light moves, shadows leap.

I am not so comfortable in the attic as in the cellar, where I have my things. The space in the attic is like certain dreams I had in the detention center where shapes meant to be solid start to melt. And there is no control. Unlike the cellar which is safe *under ground*, the attic is four stories *above ground*. The concentration of cosmic rays is higher at higher elevations on Earth.

The landlord made the suggestion last Sunday that I clean out the attic to reduce the *fire hazard* and I will get to that soon. The cellar is my No. 1 priority right now, but I will get to the attic next.

Now we are going to turn over a new leaf son aren't we? And I said, *Yes, Dad.*

THE idea of creating a *zombie* for my own purposes came to me in a brainstorm five years ago.

Yes! At such rare times you can feel the electrically charged neurons of the prefrontal brain realigning themselves like iron filings drawn by a magnet.

The Earth is continually bombarded by high-speed cosmic rays. A voice was lecturing. An amplified voice I did not even recognize at first was Dad's.

Cosmic rays from outer space. From a distance of millions of light-years. More concentrated at higher elevations. It was a darkened lecture amphitheatre at the university where I had hidden myself to hear Professor R.P. lecture to his students. Perhaps I was seeking some knowledge, or some secret? I must have nodded off in the back row, and when I woke up I did not know where I was at first, which happened sometimes then when I was not so much in control of myself and going for as long as forty-eight hours unsleeping then crashing wherever I might be. If Dad saw me there amid his many students, he gave no sign, of course! But he could not see me, I am sure, in the darkness.

On an illuminated screen at the front of the amphitheatre was a computer simulation of a section of the universe two hundred million light-years across, indicating how the universe evolved from its early smoothness and equitable distribution of matter to the present condition of superclusters, galaxies, and "dark matter." *As much as ninety per cent of the universe's mass is in unseen "black holes." Most of the universe is therefore undetectable by our instruments and may not "obey" the laws of physics as we know them.*

Professor R.P.'s several hundred students were busy taking notes. It came to me that any one of them, almost, would be a suitable specimen for a *zombie!*

Except: You would want a healthy young person, male. You would want somebody with "fight" and "vigor" in him.

But the university students have always been forbidden to me after that first and only ignorant incident that, lucky for Q.P., turned out O.K. It was dark behind the dorm, and the kid was drunk and stooped over, vomiting and gagging, and when he glanced up, hearing me, the tire iron slammed down over his ear, crashing him to the ground before he could really register seeing me, so it was O.K. I was wearing my hooded jacket, and there were no witnesses, yet I panicked and ran as I would never do now! But it was O.K. A lesson was learned.

The fact is: Any university student (with the possible exception of certain of the foreign students who are so far from home) would be immediately missed. Their families care about them. And they have families.

A safer specimen for a *zombie* would be somebody from out of town. A hitchhiker or a drifter or a junkie (if in good condition). Or from the black projects downtown. Somebody nobody gives a damn for. Somebody who should never have been born.

I hurried straight from the amphitheatre to the psych library to look up the surgical method *lobotomy.*

THIS is why: Seeing the universe like that, you see how futile it is to believe that any galaxy matters, let alone any star of any galaxy or any planet the size of not even a grain of sand in all that void. Let alone any continent or any nation or any state or any county or any city or any individual.

The idea came to me at that time, too, because I was having trouble keeping my dick hard with guys' *awake eyes* observing me in intimate quarters.

I was living in my two-room place on Twelfth Street at Reardon, which was my first real place away from Dale Springs, and I was working for a moving company or maybe I had just quit that time Dad dropped by. Aged twenty-four and time to be on my own, I told them. And I meant it.

The week after Labor Day, 1989: Bunnygloves had been missing twelve days, but there was never anything in the Mount Vernon *Gazette* or on local TV—why would there be? Set out from Detroit to Minnesota and not a trace.

Many hundreds, thousands in a single year. Like sparrows of the air they fly and fall and disappear and not a trace.

Dale Springs is where Dad and Mom and my sister Ruthie live and where Q.P. grew up. A suburb of Mount Vernon, six miles west of the University. Downtown Mount Vernon is five miles to the south, yet Dad said he had *dropped by* to visit me.

The rapping at the door. My eyes flew open and my heart beat in a cold panic because now was not the time.

I called out something and was up from the bed, stumbling, pulling on my trousers. Zipping up. Dragging the khaki blanket up over the cot. The stained sheets, the sweet-stale smell.

"O.K.," I said. "I'm cool. O.K."

And it was Dad. My Dad. *Dropped by* to see how I was.

The chain latch was on the door. Good thing. Because when I turned the knob, there was Dr. R.P. in the crack, smiling, wearing his sand-colored corduroy face, with his tweed asshole of a mouth and his glistening white dentures in the crack of the door. I fumbled opening the door. *Dad's eyes* a few inches away.

Out of a dream of Bunnygloves and fondling. His voice as it was before the change in it. And eyes muddy-green as knowing deepened in them and the pupils shrank to pinpricks.

"Quentin, hello. Am I disturbing you?"

Dad filled the doorway, staring and breathless from the stairs. His black-plastic professor glasses riding the bridge of his nose. When his professor goatee went from brown to gray, he shaved it, but there is the shadow of the goatee on his face.

"Son?"

Asked how I was, and I said. And how was he, and things at home? And Mom and Ruthie send their love. And the eyes darting sidelong, and the nostrils widening. A pause, and then asking, "That smell, son—what is it?"

"Smell?"

I was standing, blocking Dad's view but could not block his capacity for sniffing, smelling. I looked vague and surprised, looking about the room as if I might see the smell. "Just some gym things, Dad. Sweaty socks, jogging shoes. Towels and stuff like that."

Dad asked, so reasonable, "Where is it coming from?"

"Coming from?"

"Under your bed?"

"My bed?"

Dad made a move, but I was blocking his way. His face was beginning to go red in that way of an old man's face blotching in patches. He said, "It's more than gym things, it smells like garbage. You don't have raw garbage in here, son, do you?"

Distinguished Professor, Physics. Former chair of the department and a senior fellow of the Michigan State Institute of Advanced Research.

That time Dad came to get me

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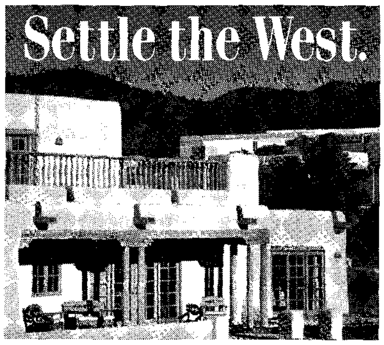

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where I was doing homework upstairs in my room. I was twelve years old, in seventh grade. He yanked me by the arm downstairs and into the garage to show me the magazines and other stuff I had hidden behind stacks of old newspapers that he had found. And his face splotched and furious, and at that time he did wear a goatee and this, too, seemed livid with outrage. Twisting the magazines in his hands to spare himself the sight of the covers and the drawings somebody had done on them in red felt pen. And the insides with more such drawings on centerfold models of male muscle-bodies and parts of certain photos scissored out. *This is sick, Quentin. This is disgusting: I never want to see anything like this again. We won't tell your mother.* Starting to say more—but his voice gave out.

Together, we burned the evidence. Back behind the garage, where Mom would not see.

He was looking at me like that now. *Dad's eyes* behind his shiny glasses. He was fifty-four years old with hairy black nostrils widening and contracting and widening like a fish's gills. "How can you live in such squalor, son? It's so hard for me to comprehend."

Between my bedsprings and the mattress were the fishing knife and the others, but I could not make a sudden move to get them. I was staring at my hands, which were trembling as if the building were vibrating from traffic. I did wonder, Could I strangle Dad? But he would put up a struggle, and he is strong. And we would be so close. I was staring at my hands as if I had never seen them before, seeing the fingers were stubby and the nails uneven and broken and edged with grime. How many times I had scrubbed my hands with soap and cleaned the nails with a knife blade and yet it had all come back.

And then the answer came to me.

"—I bet I know what it is, Dad. A dead rat."

"A dead *rat*?"

"Or a mouse. Maybe mice."

"There are dead *mice* in here?" Dad's face was contorted with disgust.

I said, trying not to stammer, "I k-know it's not the way you and Mom brought me up, Dad. I'm sorry."

"Quentin, how long has it been like this in this room?"

"Not long, Dad. A day or two."

"Aren't you bothered by it yourself?"

"I'm going to do some cleaning this weekend."

"You sleep in here, in this smell, Quentin, and you're not bothered?"

"I am bothered, Dad. I just don't get uptight about it."

"It's very disturbing to me, son, that you might be lying to me."

"Well, I don't mean to lie, Dad. I just don't know what you're asking."

"I'm asking if something is under your bed, or in those bedclothes on the floor, and why it smells. You know what I'm asking."

"Apart from the mice, Dad," I said, "I don't know what you're asking."

It went on like that. Dad's mouth shaped certain words and my mouth shaped certain words, and it was familiar to me and there was a comfort in that. And finally he gave up as he always has given up, and he asked, "Quentin, how would you like to come home for dinner tonight?" and I said, "Thanks, Dad, but I'm not hungry, I guess. I've already eaten."

FRONTAL lobotomy. Irreversible psychosurgical procedure in which nerve fibers in the frontal lobes of the brain are severed by incision for the alleged relief of mental agitation, compulsive mental cognition, and physical behavior in schizophrenics and other emotionally disturbed persons.

This page I tore out of the textbook. I could almost see my *zombie* materializing before my eyes!

Also, from "Psychosurgery" (1942) by Dr. Walter Freeman of George Washington University:

> When the patient is unconscious I pinch the upper eyelid between thumb and finger and bring it well away from the eyeball. I then insert the point of the transorbital leucotome into the conjunctival sac, taking care not to touch the skin or lashes, and move the point around until it settles against the vault of the orbit. I then drop to one knee, beside the table, in order to aim the instrument parallel with the bony ridge of the nose, and slightly toward the midline. When the 5 cm. mark is reached, I pull the handle of the instrument as far laterally as the rim of the orbit will permit in order to sever fibers at the base of the frontal lobe. I then return the instrument halfway to its previous position and drive it further to a depth of 7 cm. from the margin of the upper eyelid. Again I sight the instrument as carefully as possible, and take a profile photograph of it in this position. This is the nearest approach to precision of which the method can boast. Then comes the ticklish part. Arteries are within reach. Keeping the instrument in the frontal plane, I move it 15° to 20° medially and

> about 30° laterally, return it to the mid position, and withdraw by a twisting movement, at the same time exercising considerable pressure on the eyelids to prevent hemorrhage. Then to the opposite side, using an identical instrument, but freshly sterilized.

There were several diagrams of the procedure of the *transorbital lobotomy* and I ripped these out, too.

Mom and Dad had hoped for me to become a scientist like Dad, or a doctor, but things had not turned out that way. But I knew I could perform a *transorbital lobotomy* even if it was in secret. Dr. Freeman stated that he did as many as thirty lobotomies a day sometimes, often with only a "humble" icepick. So why not Q.P.?

At Tuesday's group session, Dr. B. urged us to "speak from the heart." There are eleven of us. Eyes are avoided. When it was my turn, my shoulders hunched up and I was staring at my shoes, which are jogging shoes all stained and rust colored. I said how ashamed I was to betray the loving trust of my Mom and Dad not just once but many times since the age of sixteen. I wished I could turn the clock back to infancy, I said. And start Time again. When I was pure and good. When I was with God. I said I believed in God but did not think He believed in me, because I was not worthy. There is a way Mom's face creases and collapses when she cries, and my face collapsed like this, and the guys were embarrassed and looked away. One of them, a cool black jock with a shaved head, passed me a tissue. I was talking fast now, like a runaway trailer-truck down a mountain road. Said how sorry I was about the ten-year-old boy I had "molested" (but did not give such details as that he was *black* and *retarded* and a natural *zombie*—I'd thought!). I said I did not know what had happened—whether I had approached the boy myself in the alley back behind the dumpster where my van was parked or whether the boy had followed me there and "picked me up" without my knowing it. Because sometimes things happen to me I cannot understand. Too fast for me to understand. The boy had demanded money from me or he would tell on me. He demanded ten dollars and when I gave him ten dollars he demanded twenty dollars and when I gave him twenty dollars he demanded fifty dollars and when I gave him fifty dollars he demanded a hundred dollars, which was when I lost control and tried to hurt him, *but I did not hurt him I swear*. By this time I was stammering and my face was wet with tears and the guys were looking away from me, but Dr. B. asked had I known this boy for very long and had I *felt affection* for him, and I was unable to speak for a while, and then I said, "Yes, Doctor. That is the reason I lost control."

After each of our sessions, Dr. B. fills out a report for the probation office. Dr. E. and Mr. T. also. I am not allowed to see these reports, which are confidential, but often I am told things to make me hopeful.

Quentin, you are making real progress lately, aren't you? Getting in touch with your emotions, Quentin!

A true *zombie* would be mine forever. He would obey, saying, "Yes, master" and "No, master." He would kneel before me, saying, "I love you, master. There is no one but you, master." And so it would be. A true *zombie* could not say a thing that was not but only a thing that was. His eyes would be open and clear, but there would be nothing inside them *seeing*. Nothing *passing judgment*. Like you who observe me and who think your own secret thoughts—always and forever *passing judgment*. A *zombie* would say, "God bless you, master." He would say, "Fuck me in the ass, master, until I bleed blue guts." He would beg. He would be respectful at all times. He would never laugh or smirk. He would cuddle like a Teddy bear. He would rest his head on my shoulder like a baby. Or I would lay my head on his shoulder like a baby. We would lie beneath the covers in my bed in the caretaker's room listening to the March wind and the bells of the Music College tower chiming, and we would count the chimes until we fell asleep at exactly the same moment.

I purchased an icepick, November, 1989. Cruising the van along the Lake Michigan shore, I stopped at a little crossroads store and there was no trouble. Nobody seemed suspicious. My fish-gutting knife, my twelve-inch stainless-steel German steak knife, my Swiss Army jackknife, and oth-

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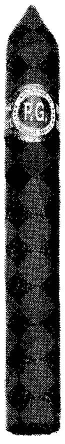

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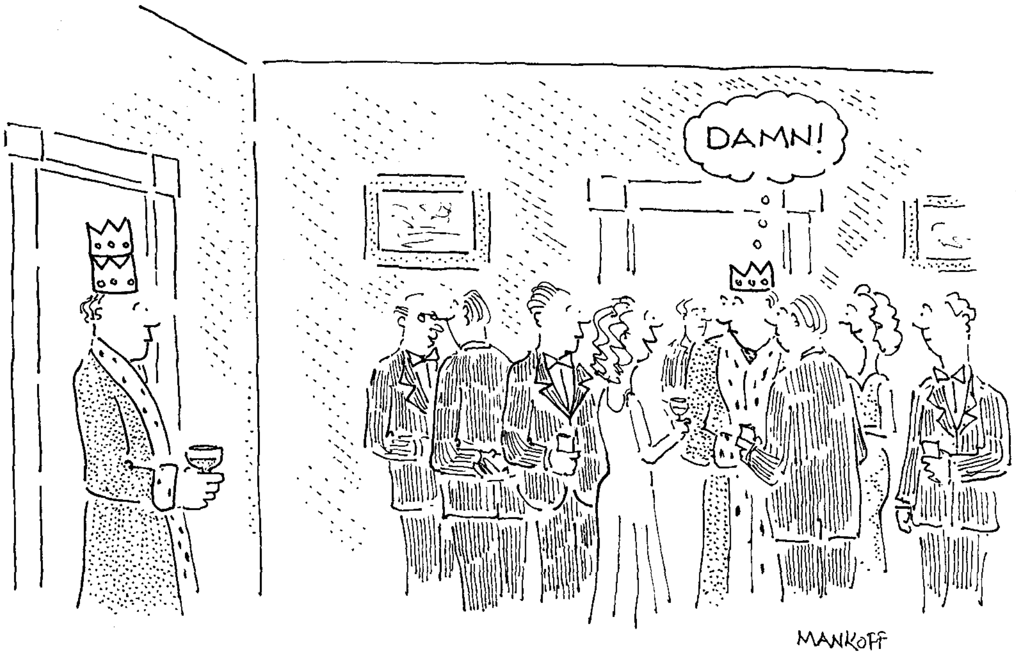


ers of my collection I already had. Began my collection in seventh grade, knowing it would be put to use someday but not when. Or what use exactly.

Dr. E., who is my "personal therapist," paid by Dad, is always asking, *What is the nature of your fantasies, Quentin*? and I am blank and puzzled, blushing like in school when I could not answer a question of my teacher's or even comprehend it. *I don't think I have any—what you call "fantasies," Doctor. I don't know.*

At the time of Bunnygloves, Raisineyes, Big Guy, I did not have access to my caretaker's quarters and the cellar of 118 Church but only my van and the two-room place on Twelfth Street. The tub in the bathroom. My procedures were crude, and I was continually thwarted in my experiments. Bunnygloves, who I had such hope for, convulsed like a madman when the icepick entered the top of his left eyeball and screamed through the sponge gag, actually snapping the baling wire securing his ankles, but he did not regain consciousness, dying in twelve minutes. My first *zombie*—a grade of F. Raisineyes lived for seven hours, sometimes almost conscious, but I had to lift the eyelid of his remaining eye (I only "did" one) and secure it with adhesive tape. Big Guy was the most promising for by then I had learned to use the icepick, skillfully *aiming the instrument parallel with the bony ridge of the nose* as Dr. Freeman described. Also, Big Guy for a part-black part-Indian dropout basketball player–junkie–dealer from Lansing was *healthy*. And his bones so long and hard, his muscles, his penis like a length of blood sausage, his skin a deep rich plum-black I loved to lick with my tongue and gnaw with my teeth. Yet Big Guy disappointed me like the others for he never regained "consciousness" in any true sense of the word after the lobotomy and after I removed the gag breathed deep shuddering snoring gasps. I worried they might be heard through the walls of my room if there was anybody to hear them. Big Guy lived approximately fifteen hours—dying, I think, as I was fucking him in the ass to discipline him as a *zombie*, and I only comprehended he was dead when during the night, waking needing to take a piss, I felt how cold he was, his arms and legs slung over me as I'd arranged them already stiffened in rigor mortis so I feared I would be locked in his embrace!

My first three *zombies*—all F's.

Yet I did not give up hope. Nor have I to this day.

MOM called and left a message on the answering tape. At the time I was up on the second floor using a screwdriver to open the rusted furnace vent in Akhil's room. Akhil is from Calcutta, a physics graduate student, very shy and dark-skinned and must be in his mid-twenties at least but looks fifteen, and his English is so soft and whispery I have to stoop to hear him, taking care not to make eye contact. "Thank you, Mister," he said, and in our mutual awkwardness I did glance at him, and he was looking at me, his eyes liquidy-brown, a glisten in them.

My voice sounded American, a little forced. But I believe I said what any caretaker of a rooming house would say—"It's my job."

Mom's call got screwed up on the answering tape, erased. Asking me would I like to come for dinner Sunday, probably.

SORRY to be missing so many classes at Dale, especially since I am determined to *turn over a new leaf* this time. And in Intro to Accounting I fucked up the first quiz. And missed the second. And since the arrest and the hearing and the suspended sentence, Dad looks at me differently. It's as if he is fearful of me where before he was impatient and judgmental, as though Q., his only son, were a student failing a course of his. I know he is thinking, No matter the shame to the P. family that Q. is an admitted sex offender, at least Q. is not in the state prison. At least his ten-year-old victim was not injured. Or worse. Dad saying, *It's an investment in our joint future, son!* smiling at me with his wrinkly little pink-asshole mouth and his professor eyes narrowed inside his glasses.

Mom hugs me and stands on tiptoe to kiss my cheek, and her bones are like dried sticks I could break in my hands, so I stand very straight and still, not breathing to inhale her smell. What that smell is I do not know and do not name. *You know we love you, Quentin,* Mom is always saying like a tape when a button is punched. *This time things will turn out just fine.*

I said, *That's right, Mom.*

I said, *I'm sure going to see to that, Mom.*

Except: I wake up here in my caretaker's bed at the ground floor rear of 118 Church Street and I remember my computer class was the day before, or I'm driving out to Dale and it's the wrong day, or the wrong time. So I will drive out anyway since the van is in motion headed in that direction and I am superstitious about changing course on impulse. And if there's a hitchhiker I will observe him, impersonally contemplating what sort of *zombie* he might make, but I am not tempted so close to home. And out at the college, which is this crappy, fifth-rate business school everybody at the University looks down their asses at, I will park my van and stroll across "campus" thinking I will visit my profs and tell them there was an illness in the family, but I can't find their offices or nobody's there when I do or I get sidetracked trailing some young black guys from my accounting class into the student union where I'll have a cup of coffee and see who's around if I recognize anybody or if they recognize me or even if they don't. I'm carrying my textbooks and I'm dressed O.K., not with my hair in a ponytail any longer since the arrest, though I am wearing Raisineyes' funky leather slouch-brim hat, and Bunnygloves' fur-lined gloves are in the pocket of my three-hundred-dollar sheepskin jacket, and my aviator-style amber prescription sunglasses are a copy of Big Guy's shades, so I look pretty cool, I think, for an ordinary white guy pushing thirty, his hairline receding. And it's surprising how friendly the Dale students are, and how trusting. All of them commuters like me, living in Mount Vernon or the county. Even a girl will pull out a chair to sit at my table if she sees friends of hers with me or even if they're not friends exactly. *Hi!* she'll say, like a high-school cheerleader, like the girls in my high school who looked through Q.P. like he didn't exist. *You're in my computer class, aren't you?*

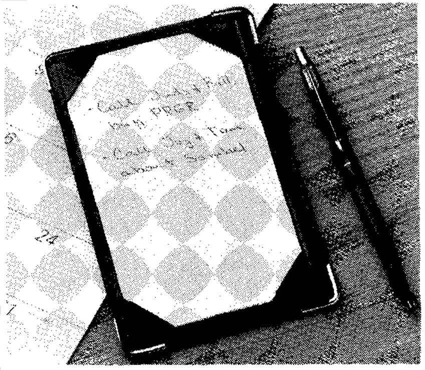
I should mention my hand-tooled bronze-leather boots, a little big for me, courtesy of Rooster. Of last September, Gratiot Avenue in Detroit.

I have never selected any specimen (except the black boy I don't count from the Roosevelt projects) in Mount Vernon or vicinity. But it is good to keep in practice by speaking with them. Though mostly I listen. To learn their words, their slang. The way they move their hands, their mouths, their eyes. Though shrinking from their eyes. Sometimes driving one of them home, going a few miles out of my way. It's no trouble, and they will remember my face and the green Ford van with the American-flag decal on the back window. A big decal exactly fitting the back window. If I needed a character witness, for instance at a trial, I think they would remember Q.P.—if not the name, then the fact that I was kind.

Once lent a skinny Chinese kid my sheepskin jacket on a freezing winter night, no questions asked. And he returned it. His name Chou or Chih with a *ping!* sound somewhere in it. And his eyes shining-black.

ONE time, one of them was fighting the drug, his eyes rolling sideways in his head like marbles. Saying, "Hey, man, I guess I don't want to do this, O.K.? Lemme go, man—" and I told him he could stay for a while, it was all right to stay for a while, and I'd pay him for his trouble, and he said he wouldn't tell anybody if I let him go, but I knew better. And I tightened the cord so his big eyes bulged and his skin was ashy-plum and the lips I could not take my eyes off were ashy, and it started shooting through me like electricity: *He knows! He's caught on! No turning back!* Which is the point that must be reached. The threshold of the black hole that sucks you in. A fraction of a second before and you are free, but a fraction of a second later and you are sucked into the black hole. And my dick hard as a club. And big as a club. And the sparks of my eyes. And I did not stammer as I had when first he swung into the van—the cool dude eying whitey.

It was two barbiturates I gave him, mashed and in vodka. I said, "I am not a sadist, I am not a torturer, I think you are terrific, I ask you to coöperate and you will not be hurt." I was excited. I had to unzip. He saw, and he knew. You know even when you don't. "I will not hurt you," I said, "if you lay still." But he was struggling. He was crying. I saw he was just a kid. Maybe nineteen years old. I jammed the sponge into his mouth so he was almost choking, and I had to be careful, I did not want to lose him. He was tied, he was drugged and should have been anesthetized, but it was taking too long. He was in the tub naked and the water was running and that freaked him. *He knows! Knows!* Though he did not see the icepick yet, which I had hidden. Snaky-supple kid with a gold filling in a front tooth, and I'd brought him to the apartment with a



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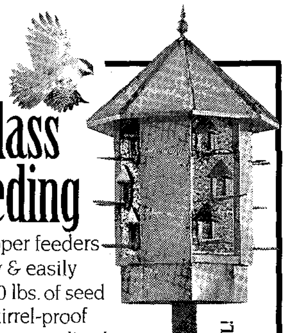

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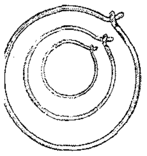

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promise of home-cooked food, and vodka, and he'd been thinking he'd be sucked off by whitey and paid for his trouble and maybe clear out whitey's possessions, but that was not how it came about, and the panic in his eyes said that this was so. Reddish-kinky hair and a red sheen to his skin. Like oxblood shoe polish. Good-looking and he knew it, but it's too late now. I secured his head in the clamp and brought the icepick to his right eye, lifting the eyelid as Dr. Freeman described, but when I inserted it he struggled, screaming through the sponge, and there was a gush of blood and I came, I lost control and came, so hard I kept coming and coming like a convulsion. I couldn't stop, or even breathe. I was groaning and gasping for air, and when it was over and I was in control again, I saw the damage I had done—the icepick rammed up to the hilt in his eye up into his brain, and he was dying, he was dead, another fuckup and no *zombie.*

And then the disposal of. The heavy weight of. A downer.

Must drive at the speed limit and obey all traffic regulations and must not act "suspicious." A landfill or dump is most strategic, of course, where the ground is already broken. And far from home base—fifty, seventy, a hundred miles. The extra effort is worth it, like buying a new wig, whiskers every time. Vacant lots, wooded areas near parks—risky because kids play in them. But empty marshland beyond the Interstate where nobody ever goes is a good bet.

How many times. I keep mementos but no records. I memorize what's required then move on. And sometimes forget.

But now I have the basement of this old house.

A LITTLE sickness in the air from so much fragrance everywhere—somebody's left-behind "New Anthology of English Verse." I leafed through it in the student union and read these lines, and something rang in me like the bells of the Music College. Because now it is spring, it is April, and my first year of probation is behind me.

THE house at 118 Church Street, built 1892. Crumbling stone foundation. The cellar was renovated in the nineteen-fifties so there are two sections: the new, and the old. The new has a poured concrete floor and reinforced walls with beaverboard panelling. The gas furnace is here, water heater, fuse box, caretaker's workbench, and such tools as my electric power drill and Cherokee chainsaw. The old section of the cellar is never used. It has a hard-packed earth floor. The ceiling rafters are low, and filthy with cobwebs, walls rotted. The dry stone cistern unused for decades. A strong smell of drains and some seepage in the rainy months, but I have installed a second pump. To get back there you move on your haunches, slowly. You need a good flashlight. You need a will that cannot be broken.

The cistern has almost been converted and will be ready for use soon. And if a *zombie* is a failure, there is the remainder of the cellar for safe disposal in the earth. And there is a new door replacing the old rotted door, and last week I purchased a steel padlock from Sears for extra security.

I WAS allowed to plead guilty to "sexual misdemeanor committed against a minor." The lawyer Dad hired for me and the prosecution lawyer worked it out. And Judge L. was understanding. Where money changes hands, and it is the word of an inexperienced white man, unmarried, twenty-nine years old, against the word of a black boy from the projects, and this black boy, ten years old, is from a "dysfunctional" family, there is no problem knowing where justice lies. And Q.P. was repentant, he was ashamed and had "learned his lesson." One look at him, you knew.

Two years' suspended sentence, psychotherapy, counselling. Regular reporting to probation officer Mr. T. Agreed?

Leaving Judge L.'s chambers I was shaky. I was wiping my face, and Dad was gripping me by the elbow. *Buck up, son* (quote unquote), *everything is fine. Son*? And, outside, Mom and Ruthie and Reverend Eckhorn, who is Mom's friend and who "vouched" for me to the authorities, were waiting. And I was wearing a new suit of brown checks and I was wearing a beige bow tie, and my hair had been cut, trimmed neat at the ears and the nape of the neck, and I was not crying now but smiling and hugging my family, and I was shaking Reverend Eckhorn's hand saying *Thank you, thank you, I am so happy, so grateful. Thank you for your faith in me.* A warm rain speckled my face.

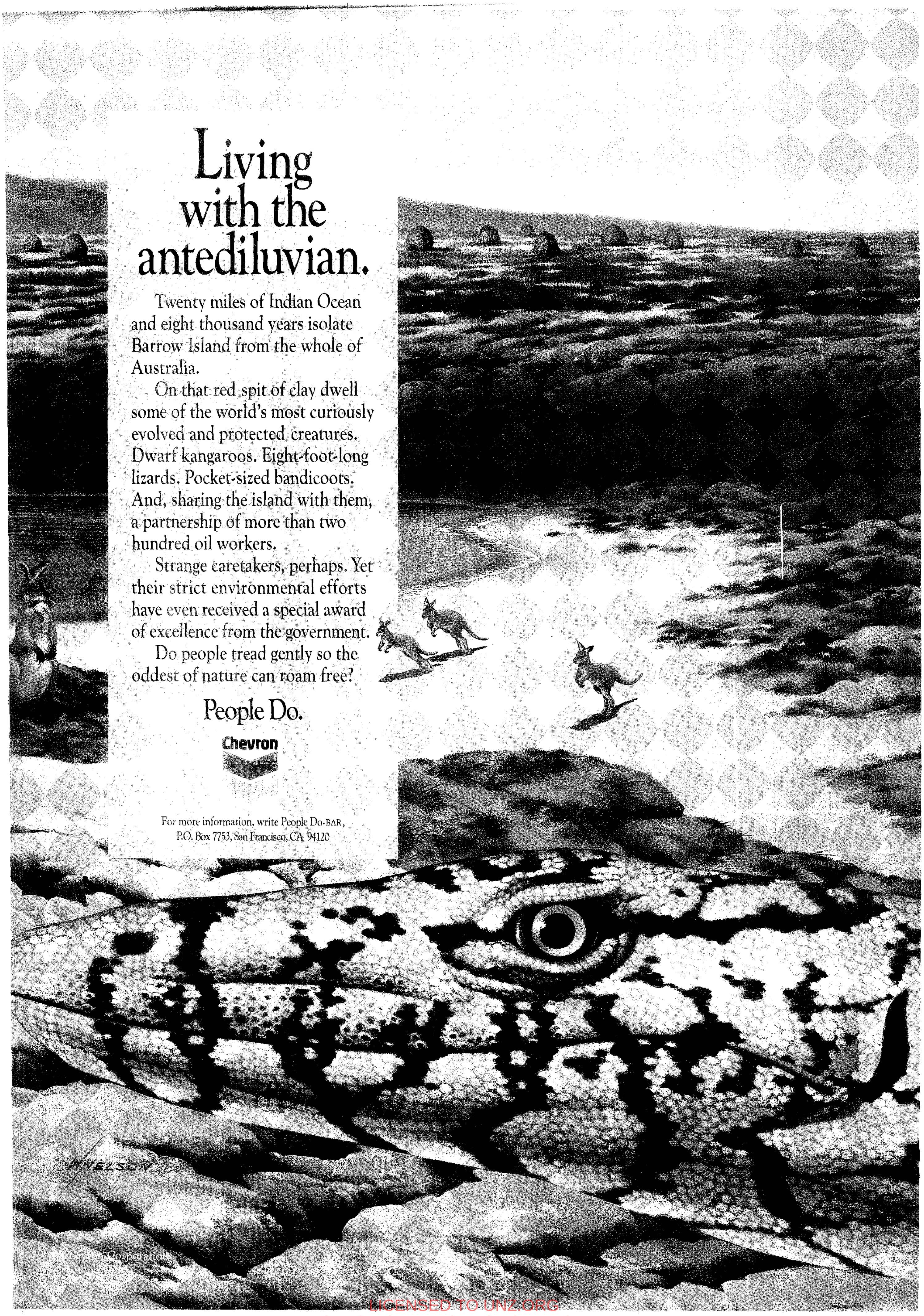
Dad handed me the car keys with a request for me to drive, and I understood it was to show how he trusted me. The family trusted me and I would not let them down ever again. Driving out of the city to Dale Springs, where the houses are set on large lots and the streets are tree-lined, I felt such a sense of homecoming and being loved, and I kept well within the speed limit, not minding when other drivers honked their horns and passed me impatiently. Ruthie, who is Big Sis even now, aged thirty-five and principal of a high school, looking after her kid brother, said, "Quen was always the one of us who could drive a car," then adding quick, "I mean *is*. Right, Quen?" I grinned into the rear-view mirror. "Right, Ruthie."

Driving home. A warm-rainy windy day. Dad beside me in the passenger's seat, stroking his chin where his goatee had been and Mom and Ruthie in the back, I could almost not remember why I was so happy and feeling so free, thinking of black cock, shy shrinking boy penis like a baby rabbit, skinned. I'd held it in my hand tickling the tip with the tip of the icepick, but the pills hadn't taken effect yet, and the boy panicked, beginning to bellow even before he broke free, and crashed through the locked rear door of the van. So help me God, I don't know how. And running, calling out for help, bellowing like a fire alarm rising louder and louder. My *zombie!*

He had not asked for a nickel, really. He was trusting as a dog. Yet I could not trust *him.*

They were asking me something, and I wasn't listening, but I must have answered, *O.K.* Dad laid his hand on my shoulder. For the first time, driving that day, I believed I could feel the motion of the Earth.

The Earth rushing through the emptiness of space, spinning on its axis, but you don't feel it. For to feel it is to be scared and happy at once and to know that nothing matters but that you do what you do and what you do you *are.* And I felt it, and I knew I was moving into the future. There is no *past* anybody can get to, to alter things or even to know for sure what they were, but there is definitely a future, we are already in it. ♦



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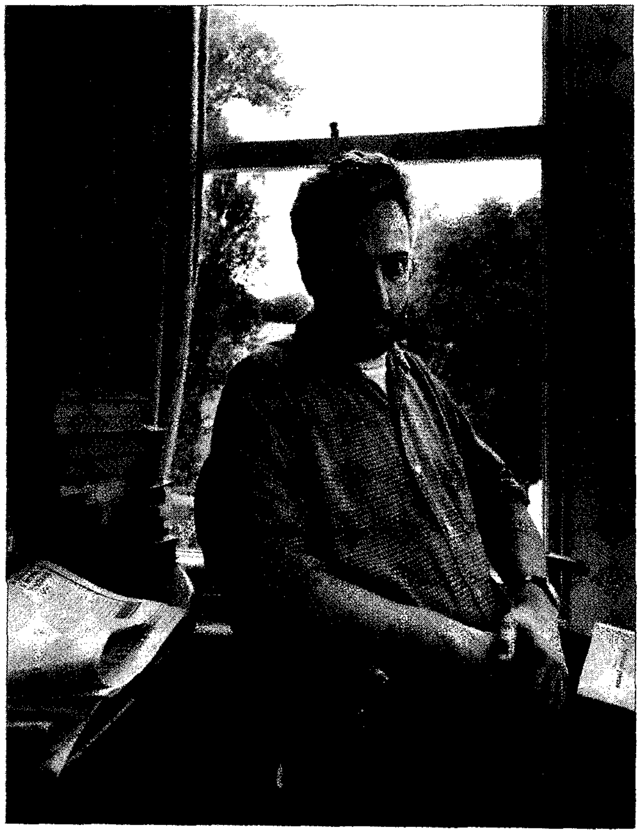
SEX AND THE SINGLE MAN

BY CRAIG SELIGMAN



Alan Hollinghurst's second book, "The Folding Star," moves beyond provincial gay territory to the full-fledged European novel.

Alan Hollinghurst's 1988 début, "The Swimming-Pool Library," made a bigger splash than anyone might have expected of a book that could be labelled, uncharitably but not inaccurately, a gay sex novel. Nicholson Baker documented his enthusiasm in the fourth chapter of "U and I," and it was typical of the reaction: "Once you get used to the initially kind of disgusting level of homosexual sex, which quickly becomes really interesting as a kind of ethnography, you realize that this is really one of the best first novels to come along in years and years!" But even allowing for the element of self-parody in Baker's response (which the context makes clear) and tiptoeing around that "disgusting," I think his evaluation misses the point: without all the gay sex, there wouldn't *be* any novel. It's the book's reason for being, its one distinguishing note. From a formal standpoint, "The Swimming-Pool Library" might have made its appearance in a much earlier era. Hollinghurst produces an easy, artful, gabby prose that is cushioned with euphony, like one of those grandmotherly English sitting rooms littered with plumped-up pillows. The sedative quality of his language probably isn't incidental to his popularity: if there are readers who might be shocked by what he writes about, they would be reassured by the way he writes about it. But the sex, pervasive and explicit as it is, is so oddly hygienic, so serene, so *pleasant,* that it seems like a cheat. It lacks the undercurrents of anxiety and neurosis that give choice pornography its thrill. William Beckwith, the aristocratic young man-about-London who is Hollinghurst's narrator and protagonist, approaches every carnal encounter with a gourmand's passion for an enticing new snack. Despite all the evidence he offers of his sensual prowess, I never could believe that he was a very good lay.

Will is meant to be an unreliable and deeply flawed (vain, selfish, shallow) narrator but nevertheless an irresistibly seductive one—both to the succession of beautiful men who start unzipping in their heads the minute their eyes meet his and to his readers, many of whom are clearly taken with his good humor, his fondness for his friends, and the Emma Woodhouse-like improvability that he exhibits when his comeuppance comes. Maybe a decent heart does beat inside that smug cocksman, but I couldn't get past his unkindness. Both Will and his creator have a cold, sharp eye for human imperfections: everyone gets looked at in the unforgiving light of the grading process, and those who are too old or too fat or too poor or shy or sad to measure up—well, somebody has to be on the bottom.

The narrator of Hollinghurst's high-aspiring new novel, "The Folding Star" (Pantheon; $24)—nominated for the Booker Prize in England—looks very different from Will Beckwith, at first: he's not rich, he's got no social position to speak of, and at thirty-three he's suffering the first indignities of middle-age spread. But aging and spreading though Edward Manners may be, when he walks into a bar you can be certain that he'll walk out with the most gorgeous trick in the place. Only the truly, incurably heterosexual can resist his lust. Will Beckwith lives. Or at least Edward and Will, unlike the frustrated souls who people the rest of the world, get what they desire. The writing strives for a tone of autumnal resignation—not so premature for a character whose friends are dying of AIDS—but it isn't warmed by much humility.

Partly to put the devastation of his circle in England behind him, Edward has fled to a small Flemish city (a version of Bruges) to tutor two students in English. Sixteen-year-old Marcel Echevin, pudgy and sad, is too asthmatic to go to school; Luc Altidore, troubled,

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luscious, and seventeen, has been thrown out. Edward at once becomes infatuated, and then obsessed, with Luc. (About the only feeling that he can work up for Marcel, apart from distaste, is pity.) The most serious lapse in "The Folding Star" is Hollinghurst's failure to develop Luc into an interesting character. Actually, you could argue that it's no lapse at all—that Luc isn't undeveloped, just dull. There are multidimensional characters in both of Hollinghurst's novels, but they're never the male nymphets that Will and Edward drool over. The two men share the J. R. Ackerley syndrome, that peculiarly English ardor for barely schooled lower-class youths, dumb but pretty tabulae rasae on which older men can inscribe their fantasies. Luc differs superficially from the other boys in being richer and more literate, but he's just as big a blank—which is, I suppose, why he's such a turn-on for Edward. (Cherif, a Parisian Moroccan with whom Edward carries on a lackadaisical affair for most of the novel, fits the usual mold.)

Neither Edward nor his creator sees anything too unseemly in a thirtyish teacher slavering after his teen-age charge, and the age split wouldn't be such a problem if Edward weren't so oblivious of ethical borders or so deliriously fetishistic: prying, spying, raiding the bathroom hamper for Luc's dirty underwear, nibbling on his excreta. "I groped for a handkerchief," he remembers, "and of course it was Luc's, not altogether clean, with a trouser-pocket staleness, gummed up with snot which clung in the creases in hard translucent grains, like rice: I placed one on my tongue, half-expecting it to liquefy as in some miracle with a saint's salved fluids." He wants us to regard the object of his fixation as Albertine, when it's obvious, to us and to him, that Lolita is more like it. Nabokov, naturally, doesn't go unacknowledged; there are some halfhearted stabs at Humbertesque farce, with Edward scurrying around out of sight and peeping through curtained windows, and there are flights of purulent poetry like that handkerchief passage. But a fog of wistfulness settles damply over every page. Where Nabokov stokes Humbert's perversity and then demands that we recognize his vileness, Hollinghurst hums mopey little ditties to unrequited love.

And yet there's no convincing portrait of romantic love in either of the novels. There's only hot sex or—when the object is unavailable—mooning, swooning adoration. Edward has fond memories of his parents' devotion to each other, but they belong, in a phrase he uses elsewhere, to "the never fully plausible world of heterosexual feeling." The one gay marriage he mentions involves an old flame with AIDS and his dreary antique-dealer lover, the unavoidable implication being that domestic commitment is a fallback position for those who have been cast out of the disco-bunny life style. Hollinghurst doesn't draw any distinction—I don't think he sees any—between satyriasis and passion, and so the emptiness of Edward's fixation never really strikes him, even though he gives no indication of what Edward wants Luc for except to screw him to death.

Still, no one regards Edward as anything but upstanding and, bizarrely, trustworthy. Even characters who barely know him feel impelled to tell him everything. Their loquacity might make sense if Hollinghurst were offering a wry comment on the social marginality of sexual minorities—playing with the gay-best-friend scenario that's become familiar in the movies—but he has too much ego invested in Edward to see him as anything but central. The reason everyone opens up to Edward isn't psychological but structural: "The Folding Star" is a Jamesian jigsaw puzzle in which pieces—confessions, in this case—slowly accrete until, by the end, the reader has the big picture. It's such an outmoded way to construct a book, and Hollinghurst lets the machinery show through so nakedly, that there were moments when I wondered if he wasn't being archly, intentionally postmodern. He does all manner of literary acrobatics: word games, mirror images, character parallels, repeated triads—you name it. But the effect of all this meticulous craftsmanship is mainly prissy. It's easy to see why he might feel a kinship with Robert Mapplethorpe, whom he once extolled in a catalogue essay as "both hot and cold, horny and classical, detached and passionate," adding that "the aesthetic and pornographic impulses in him are identified with each other to an extraordinary degree." But Hollinghurst, a highly refined editor of the *TLS* sunk up to his ears in culture, doesn't have the edge of scary nuttiness that explodes Mapplethorpe's formalism. His amiable jabber is anathema to the subject of obsession. This is not the voice of a man who could take a nosedive into the abyss—any abyss.

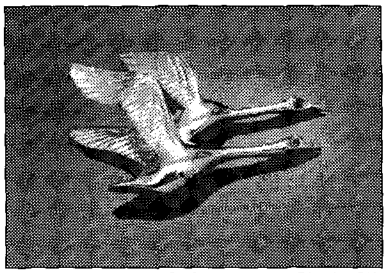
It's surprising that Hollinghurst never sets off an erotic spark between Edward and Paul Echevin, the cultivated father of Marcel and the most engaging character in the novel, even though Edward and Paul are drawn to each other intellectually and develop an affection far more substantial than any feeling between Edward and Luc. But intellectual passion isn't Hollinghurst's idea of passion, and older men don't inflame his sexual imagination. He has a different use in mind for Paul: gatekeeper to his subplot. Hollinghurst loves elaborate, important subplots. In "The Swimming-Pool Library," the papers of the elderly Lord Charles Nantwich, given to Will to read and organize, become a periscope into the gay world of England and the English before Will's birth. The plan of "The Folding Star" is considerably more ambitious. Paul serves as the curator of an art museum devoted to a fin-de-siècle Symbolist named Edgard Orst, and, as the Edward-Edgard correspondence suggests, the subplot parallels the main plot; Orst is supposed to have been erotically fixated on a youthful object, too. In time, Edward learns that Orst perished at the hands of the Nazis: as his story unfolds piece by piece, the Holocaust lies waiting at the end. The troubled history of Europe in this century makes an impressive foundation for the novel, which is structured as a journey toward twin revelations, one intimate (Luc), the other world-historical (Orst). But how can you trust revelations from a narrator who is unrevealed to himself?

IN "The Folding Star," Hollinghurst has moved beyond the gay provinces and on to the full-fledged European novel. Whatever its limitations, though, the expressly gay novel is still a young enough form to shine with possibilities, even if cheerleading is one of them. Certainly the Lord Charles subplot of "The Swimming-Pool Library" emits a noble glow common to many of the novels and, especially, to the oral histories and documentary films about gay men and women in the era before Stonewall. Not that the heroism isn't real: most of these works deal with the rebels of the period, who were living their lives, to a greater or lesser extent, defiantly. Besides, the other side of the coin—the fear, the victimization, the self-hatred—had more than its share of coverage years ago. "American Studies" (Houghton Mifflin; $21.95), a first novel by Mark Merlis, has some of the old-fashioned self-haters in it; it even has a suicide. But, though its I-regret-everything bleakness is radically different from the tenor of other current gay fiction, it isn't a throwback. Merlis is only forty-four, and the novel, which deals with the lasting damage of McCarthyism, is an acid piece of historical analysis. The year is 1989; a sixty-two-year-old petty bureaucrat narrates his tale from a hospital bed after a brutal beating by a hustler. Depressed and more than usually disgusted with himself, Reeve (he never discloses his first name, as though he were so faded and faceless that he didn't have one) reflects on the string of failures that has been his life, and in particular on one friend and patron he didn't come through for when he was needed decades earlier: Professor Thomas Frick Slater, the author of a massive, influential tome on nineteenth-century American literature, who in 1952—after being called before a state investigative committee, instructed to name names, stripped of his teaching post, and blackmailed over an affair with a student—stuck a gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

Reeve and Slater, as obverse victims of repression, represent the two extremes of sexual personality warp: the slut and the ascetic. But at least Slater leaves his book behind him when he goes. Everything Reeve has set his hand to has crumbled to dust. As a graduate student, he drank himself out of a degree; as a bureaucrat, he has become a grim gray fixture. The pursuit of sex is about the only thing he lives for, but even as a tramp he's a washout, and has been since the little mill town of his youth stamped the pattern on his life:

> All through high school I was a harbor of last resort for boys—and sometimes men—too poor or too lazy to hunt themselves a real piece. They would just happen upon me, or they would make assignations: Meet me in the alley behind Winslow Looms or I'll bust your teeth in. The threats were superfluous. I went unresistingly. I didn't know why. I didn't enjoy the act itself. It stopped hurting soon enough, but all I wanted was for them to be done. Still, I went with them. It made sense somehow, it felt like what I ought to be doing. They could feel that, the boys. They knew what I was before I had an inkling of it.

The adult Reeve continues using sex to reconfirm his self-contempt. For all his



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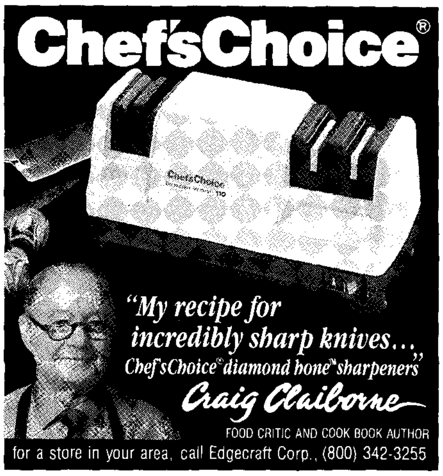

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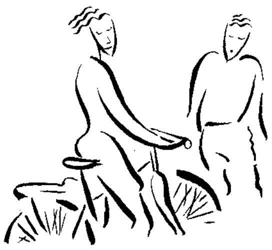

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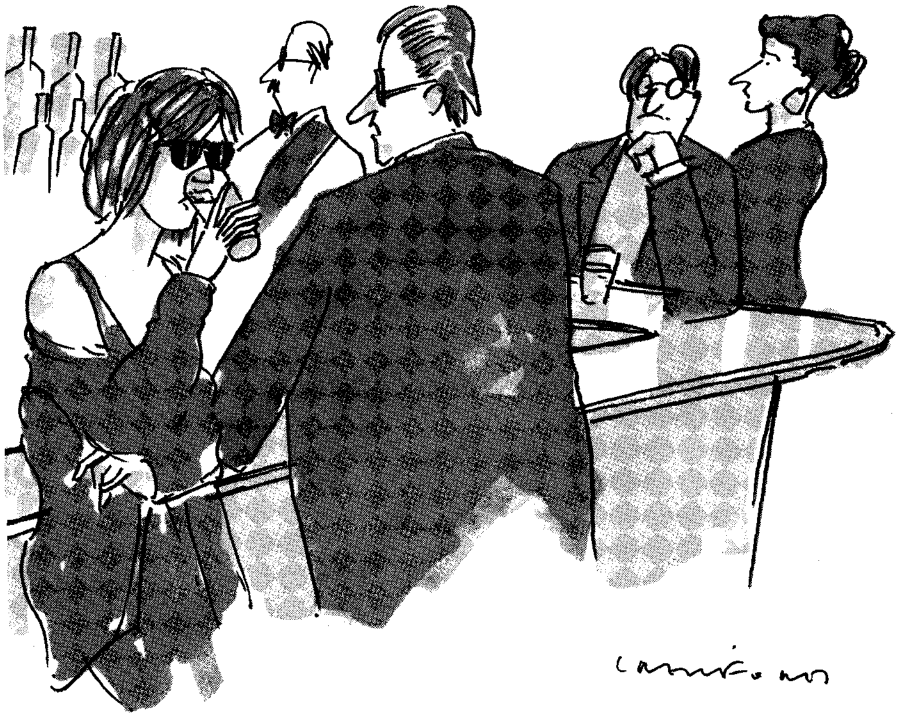
compulsive cruising, he can't believe that anyone would really want to touch him, and he milks his unattractiveness for self-pity ("If I had been beautiful, all happiness would have flowed to me. . . . But no, I had to be a platypus"). You do have to wonder how a man who has devoted his life to getting laid could let his body distend into something, as he jokes, harpoonable—or, for that matter, why he never considers pursuing a partner closer to his own age and girth. Actually, you don't have to wonder: he's clearly a masochist (in the prosaic, not the leather-and-nipple-clamps, sense) bent on wrecking every opportunity life offers him. But Merlis doesn't stop his analysis with his pathetic central character. In his most unforgiving—and canniest—stroke, he makes the connection between this personal self-loathing and the political humble-heartedness of the generation who lived through the witch-hunts:

> We thought it was just in the natural order of things that the world would force us underground and punish us unremittingly if we dared to show our faces. We all thought it: it underlay every joke and every song. . . . I'm not sure any man my age has quite got over the feeling that this was ordinary, the way it was always going to be. By the time we were let out, like prisoners freed from a camp, we just stood around, dazed, to this day never quite believing that we had actually been liberated.

Achy and morose in the days after his assault, Reeve finally has to admit that prostitutes are probably the only people left who will have sex with him, and he contemplates the prospect of giving it up: "Obviously I'm not going to bring hustlers home to beat me up any more. But of course this entails a bigger never more I haven't really thought about. Never more anybody, never more touching or smelling or waking up with anyone beside me." Of course he can't give it up. Even in his glummest moments, his eye roves incorrigibly toward the supple young dimwit in the next bed. There is a shimmer of splendor in Reeve's implacable horniness, or at least Merlis sees one there, and as a result he comes dangerously close to imbuing his character with more life force than he can sustain. But Merlis pulls it off—cleverly, and a little ruthlessly. Late in the novel, Reeve gives a raunchy, lip-smacking demonstration of the depths he'll sink to for a piece of life. His self-abasement is appalling, but that ugliness saves the book. The author can't let himself be accused of sentimentality toward Reeve; he's got to make him repulsive. That's the only way he can get away with admiring him.

"American Studies" is so abject in its resignation and so chilly in its dry-eyed



"It sounds as if it's going to be three hours with our legs crossed in Frank Gehry chairs. You go if you want."

view of human weakness that I'm surprised to find myself liking it as much as I do. I was carried along by its wit and by a deadly novelistic eye for insecurities that, I think, must lie deeply embedded (and, I hope, atrophying) in every gay man. The book is actually more pessimistic than the historical record. Slater's outlines have been traced from the long, tall shadow of F. O. Matthiessen, the author of the massive, influential "American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman" (1941) and, like Slater, a Harvard professor, a fellow-traveller, a homosexual, and a suicide. But Matthiessen was anything but tragic, and it would be a horrible irony if, forty-four years after his death, readers were to confuse him with Merlis's stilted and isolated victim. A passionately engaged and surprisingly liberated scholar, Matthiessen left behind a devoted coterie of friends and students, and, unlike the celibate Slater, he had a happy domestic life as well—a rich, intense, twenty-year-long relationship with the painter Russell Cheney. His job was never in jeopardy, either. If he was a victim of anything, it wasn't McCarthyism but clinical depression, exacerbated by the bleak global outlook at the beginning of the Cold War and by loneliness following Cheney's death, in 1945. Up until the end, though, he was active, he was productive, he was famous, and he was loved. Show me the tragedy in that.

THERE'S nothing explicitly gay in Jim Grimsley's first novel, "Winter Birds" (Algonquin; $18.95), and what's implicit would be obscure if it weren't for a forthright author's statement in a pamphlet, commissioned by the publisher, about the background of the book: "In the facts of his life, Danny was as much like me as I could make him. Danny has hemophilia, like me. Danny has a sharp tongue, like me. Danny has a family full of smart alecks, like me. Danny's father drank too much and drank badly, like mine; Danny's mother is strong like mine; Danny will grow up to be queer like I did." Danny Crell is just eight years old at the time that most of this simple, awful, and very beautiful novel takes place, on a snowy Thanksgiving Day when his father descends into a drunken, murderous rage. Grimsley has written in the second person, addressing Danny directly; in the author's statement he explains that his narrator is the older Danny recounting his story to his younger self. That may not be so clear when you're reading, but what will be is the whispered intimacy of that ghostly voice. The tenderness sustains you through events that you might otherwise prefer not to witness, because "Winter Birds" is almost a horror novel. The book is short enough to read in one or two sittings; it took me several.

Danny belongs to a dirt-poor Southern family. Bobjay, his father, has lost an arm in a farm accident (so did Grimsley's); now he can barely provide for his wife, Ellen, and their five children, and he has corroded into a sour, hateful son of a bitch. On the day of the novel, he has been caught philandering and is drinking out of mortification and denial. Ellen knows what he's capable of when he's drunk, or thinks she does, but she has too much spine and too many resentments to suffer in silence when he taunts her. In a few hours, his bad mood has spiralled into a frenzy. Kicking the shit out of her doesn't appease it; not even making her crawl and beg is enough to mollify him. By the time night falls and the snow has started, Ellen and the children have locked the doors against him, and he's stalking the house with a knife.

Grimsley wrote the book—the first in a trilogy—in the mid-eighties, but its harshness kept it from finding a publisher until, in 1992, a Berlin house brought it out in a German translation. (It's hard to imagine the delicate, unobtrusive renderings of the Crells' Carolina vernacular in another language.) In the meantime, Grimsley has made a name for himself as an Atlanta playwright, delving into all kinds of subjects, from drag queens to the Second Coming, in all kinds of styles. (His 1990 drama "The Borderland" is on the fall schedule of New York's Currican Theatre, and his drag-queen play, "Mr. Universe," will be staged next spring at the Empty Space Theatre in Seattle.) But when he turns—and he often does—back to the violence of his childhood, his writing rises to another level.

The violence, though, is just half the story. The other half is the poetry that infuses "Winter Birds," and it only intensifies the terror. Danny remembers the hemophiliac bleeding that once brought him to the threshold of death, and how the blank promise of

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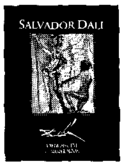

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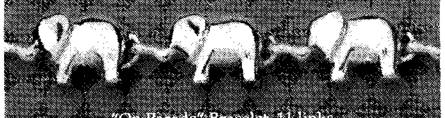

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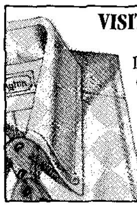

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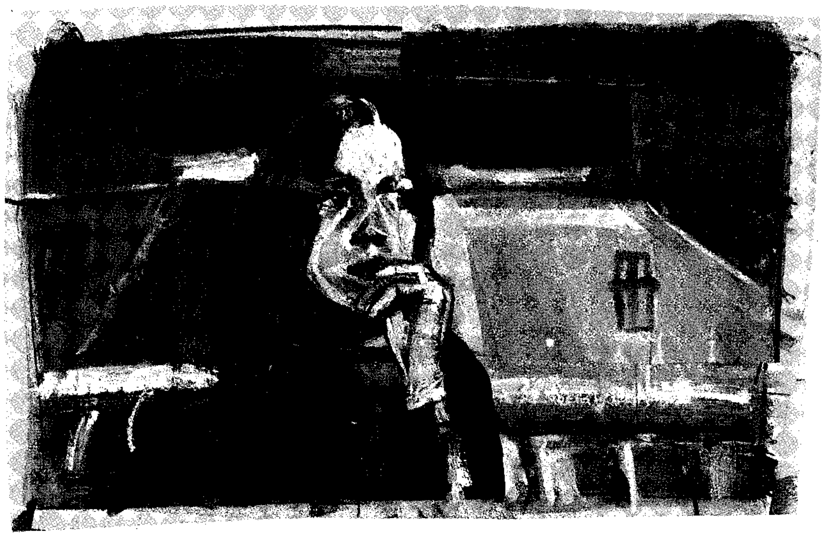
peace enticed him. The snow on that troubled Thanksgiving is the silent snow, secret snow of annihilation. And so his mother fights not just to protect him from the fury at home but to pull him back from the precipice that, she senses, something in him is longing to approach.

The title of the novel comes from the songbirds—wrens, starlings, cardinals—that Danny's brothers are out killing with BBs at the beginning of the book. The Crell children are harmless, lyrical little creatures, too. Some of this material may sound familiar. A monster of a father; a steadfast mother; a white-trash Southern landscape viewed from a gay perspective, with the bitterness of memory but also with unwavering, unsentimental love—all this, of course, is Dorothy Allison territory. I can't think of a solider tribute to offer Grimsley than to say that he doesn't suffer in the comparison. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

FUN WITH KILLERS

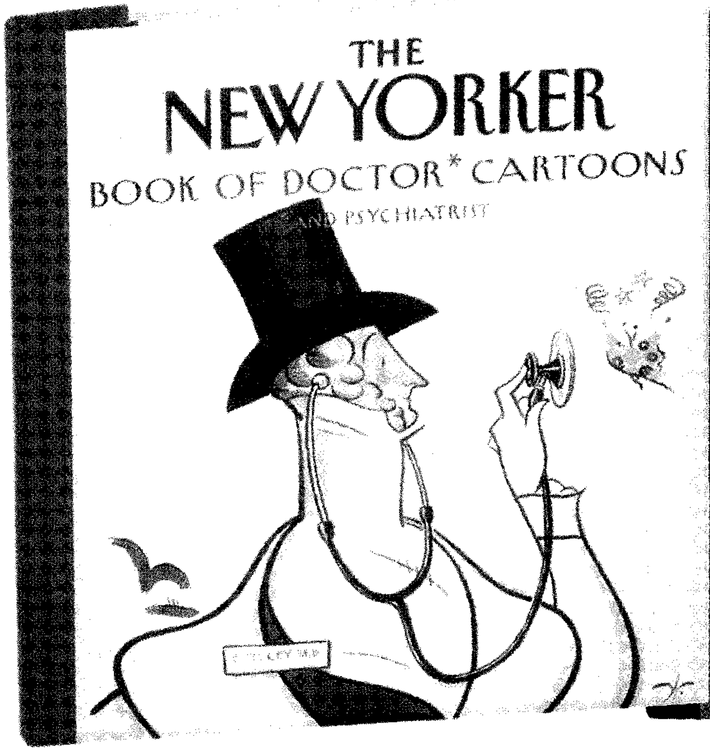
BY ANTHONY LANE

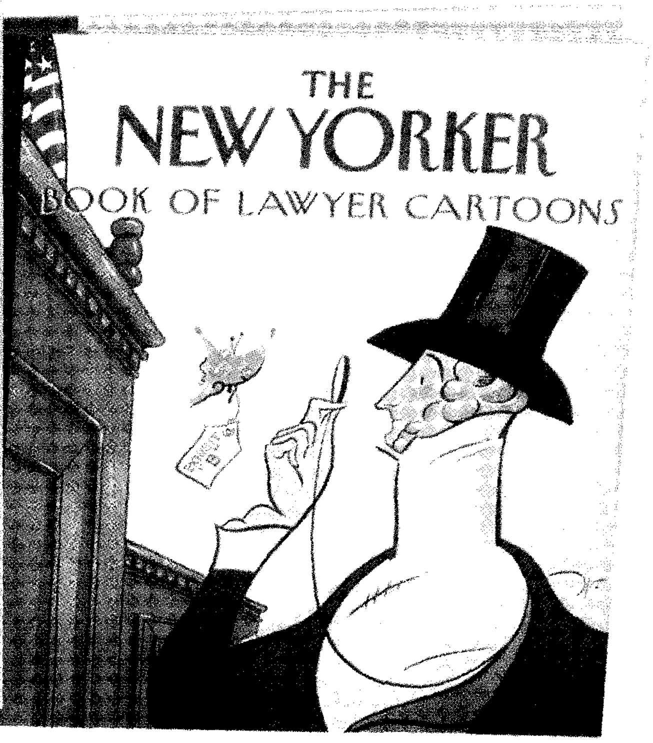


Linda Fiorentino in "The Last Seduction": A portrait of malice without a cause.

JOHN DAHL'S "The Last Seduction" is a worthy successor to his previous movie, "Red Rock West." The action has moved from dusty Wyoming to upstate New York, but the story is the same cat's cradle of cheats and lies. When a bad director repeats himself, we call it boring—the sure sign of a dried-up imagination. When someone like Dahl does it, we call it consistency—the evolution of a style. We like it that the people in his pictures behave in a reliably rancorous way; we want them to carry on like that and, if possible, to get worse; we even believe that they could slip quietly from one picture to the next, through a warp in the plot, and still find a place to make trouble. Like the crew of the starship Enterprise, who looked permanently and pleasantly surprised to arrive on a new planet and find its atmosphere breathable, the inhabitants of film noir can set down anywhere—the nineties, the forties, the big smoke or a clean-living small town—and always count on suckers and sex. Their obsessions rub off on Dahl, as they did on Joseph H. Lewis, say, or Robert Siodmak; a world as dark as this is not to be taken lightly.

"The Last Seduction" stars Linda Fiorentino as Bridget Gregory, living in Manhattan with her husband, a seedy doctor named Clay (Bill Pullman). Bridget's view of marriage is quite clear: those whom God hath joined together let seven hundred thousand dollars put asunder. She skips town—really skips, with a proud bounce in her step as she





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AND WHAT'S FUNNY about lawyers is **THE NEW YORKER BOOK OF LAWYER CARTOONS.** Here, in 85 hilarious cartoons, are lawyers in the courtroom, in their offices, ambulance chasing, winning — but mostly losing — cases ("I've just about resigned myself to your getting twenty years."); lawyers specializing, suing negligent children, negotiating a "pre-victual agreement" before ordering a Chinese lunch. Lawyers observed, teased, and immortalized by some of our most brilliant cartoonists, from Charles Addams and George Price and William Steig to William Hamilton, Lee Lorenz, Michael Maslin, Jack Ziegler and Charles Barsotti.

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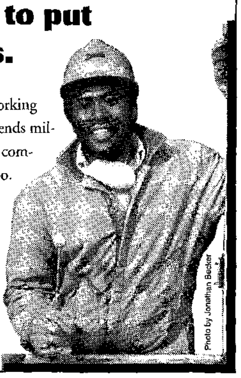

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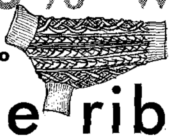

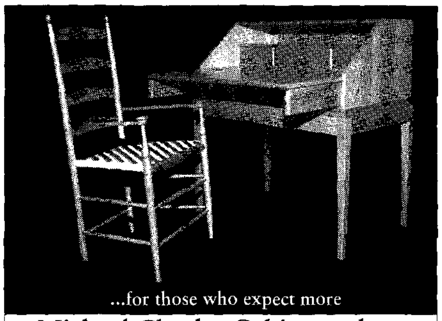

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quits their apartment building carrying the laundered cash that she and Clay have just raised from a drug deal, and leaving him to the bone-breaking mercies of a loan shark "whose first and last names end in vowels." After a long drive, Bridget stops for gas in a nothing town called Beston, goes into a bar, picks up a guy, screws him, gets a job, changes her name, screws the guy some more, asks him to kill a couple of other guys, does a little killing herself with the help of a windshield, and generally has a good time. Then she turns *really* nasty.

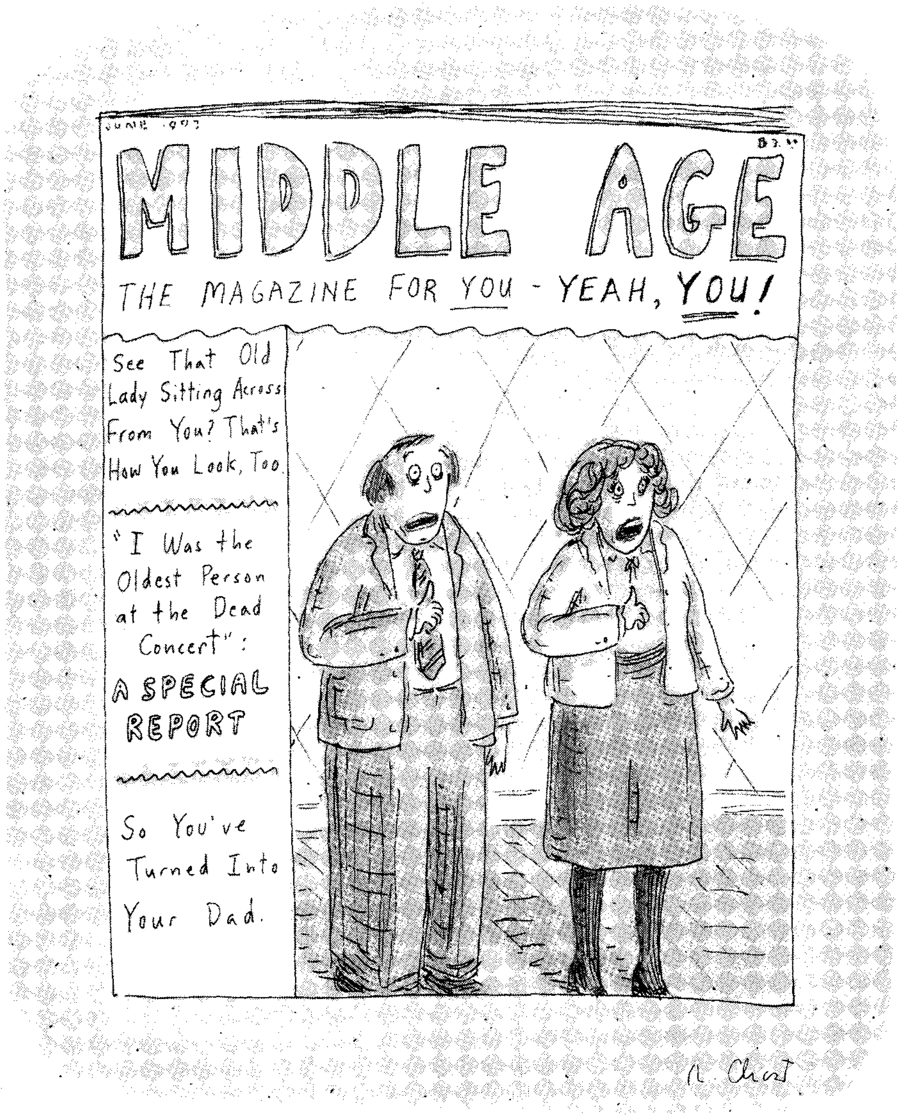
Fiorentino is not one of the world's more expressive actresses, but that doesn't matter; if anything, it's an advantage, because an inch more range could have ruined the character. Her flattish delivery and bored, unpretty looks—cold and set, as if she spent half the time lying in a freezer—are ideal for a woman who knows that integrity, even more than beauty, is only skin deep. In an age when movies (and movie stars, in their plaintive memoirs) require villainy, like unhappiness, to have terrible roots, Fiorentino provides a gorgeous, unfashionable portrait of malice without a cause. Psychology is for wimps. With her thigh-high stockings and ground-level morals, Bridget rarely dresses in anything but black and white—living proof that a person can be as noir as a film. Her hard shell is there not to protect her true inward nature but to advertise the fact that she doesn't have one, which leaves her free to pick over the soft meat of other people's feelings. The rule that governs "The Last Seduction," as it did "Mildred Pierce" and "Out of the Past," is that a private history can only be a source of shame, to be dug up and exploited by those who have had the wit to erase their own. These movies lie at the darkest end of light entertainment, acid correctives to the Western and the musical; they laugh at the American legend of self-improvement, at the vaunted virtue of the fresh start. When the fine citizens of Beston say "Good morning" to Bridget, she rolls her eyes and goes to sit in the car.

Not that Dahl's work is depressing. It's tight and swift, eased along by an unbothered jazz score, and the spectacle of Bridget's progress is scandalously good fun. You cheer on her intellectual trumping of stupid men, and try not to flinch at the hyped-up physical relish that Fiorentino brings to the role; she doesn't smile much, but she licks money, and chews gum as if trying to bite through wire, and sniffs her fingers after feeling up a man. The dope in question is Mike (Peter Berg), whose efforts to be civilized, let alone affectionate, are not always a complete success. "You're not from around here?" he asks politely. "Fuck off," Bridget replies. He tells her about his job as a claims adjuster. "It's intimate," he says. "It's boring," she snaps, although when he starts mentioning some of the deaths he deals with, her expression changes, and the camera makes a wonderfully slow move toward her, watching her wickedness unfurl. That's about as flashy as the movie gets; the events are so lurid and lustful that Dahl wisely decides to compose them with visual calm. His trademark is the detail that flares in the gloom: at night, he picks out a plume of car exhaust, or the light receding along telephone wires. No wonder Bridget prospers here; this is a world for bright sparks.

You could argue that Steve Barancik's screenplay suffers from modernity, from too broad a license; the characters of fifties noir used to sweat not with desire but with the frustration—even sexier—of being forbidden to fulfill that desire in front of us, and the economical bitchiness of their dialogue was forced upon them by the fact that they couldn't swear, whereas Bridget can have Mike ("my designated fuck") as loudly and as openly as she wants. If "The Last Seduction" remains a shocking movie, that has nothing to do with the sex—Bridget hanging grimly onto a chain-link fence, banging the roof of her car, you name it—or with the occasional crunches of violence; it's because Dahl has kept his nerve and bred that rare and unsettling creature, the anti-love story. At one moment, Bridget seems to soften and relent, telling Mike that she had suffered, confessing shyly, "Maybe I could love you." Pause. She looks up "Will that do?" I've seen the film twice now, and on both occasions the audience, schooled in sentimental repentance, gasped at this line as if kicked in the stomach. The true femme fatal would rather die than fake an orgasm but she does a damn good imitation of the human heart.

"THE LAST SEDUCTION" is not a great movie, but so what? Hollywood doesn't need great movies right now. It needs good movies. Nobody can legislate for genius, or train it, let alone predict it; but you can foster a culture in which competent, entertaining pictures are produced on a regular basis (and from which genius may spring without warning). The saddest thing about the industry at present is not that we lack masterpieces but that the staples—the romantic comedies, the thrillers—are, for the most part, so weak and illiterate. We need a dozen steady genre-nuts like John Dahl to plug away at their obsessions, and we depend on senior directors like Woody Allen to keep on producing the goods, the lighter the better. His new picture, "Bullets Over Broadway," is so genial and well oiled, so exactly what is required, that it leaves you with a quite disproportionate sense of good cheer. It's set in the New York of the roaring twenties, although Allen has the good sense to go easy on the roars. He prefers the squealing, yearning, hamming, two-timing twenties; the movie is exuberant, and never less than fun, but, unlike "The Cotton Club," it doesn't try to sell us the myth that an entire age can be consumed by non-stop exuberance. There are whooping showgirls, but their dancing ends quickly, and they matter less than the people watching them: the stubborn and the confused, the hopers, the no-hopers—all the regulars who troop through Allen's imagination.

First in line is David Shayne (John Cusack), an intense young playwright who believes that art can change the world—a pure conviction soiled only by the fact that his own view of the world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stretches no farther than Greenwich Village. David's new offering is a soul-scouring drama, of which, mercifully, we hear only brief snatches; his leading lady, Helen Sinclair (a braying Dianne Wiest), offers to introduce him to Eugene O'Neill. "He's heard your work is morbid and depressing, and he's dying to meet you," she breathes. The production is funded by a mobster named Nick Valenti (Joe Viterelli). With his pitted, sagging features and his unstoppable habits of destruction, Nick is a kind of human lava flow, and he's not about to let a little thing like artistic integrity get in his way. The play can only go ahead if it includes a part for his floozy, Olive Neal (Jennifer Tilly), who likes to wear a pink feather boa and slippers the size of Pekinese. Olive is duly cast as a psychiatrist, presumably on the ground that it is easier to investigate other people's minds if you aren't weighed down with one of your own.

Olive turns up with a bodyguard in tow. To begin with, he's not much more than a hat, a dark suit, and an attitude, but slowly he rouses himself into a character. His name is Cheech (Chazz Palminteri), and he knows more about life, and the various ways of ending it, than David will ever learn. At an indefinable point, you realize that what could have been a bitty little period piece, a stamp-album movie like "Radio Days," is becoming something far more intricate—a soul-swap comedy. Distracted by his sentimental education, the playwright turns aside from drama, leaving the burden of his art to the moody Cheech, who beefs up the dialogue, shifts the structure, and takes care of a little casting glitch. Allen has always found hoods funny—decades ago he was writing about Albert (The Logical Positivist) Corillo—but this is his neatest invention yet: the aesthete who packs heat. Palminteri comes fresh from "A Bronx Tale," and I imagine him pausing for a second before accepting the role of Cheech; after all, it gathers up and laughs at everything he treated so seriously in that film. But I'm glad he took the part, because he walks away with the picture. He tempers the edge of hysteria in some of the other performances, phasing himself into your attention until, by the end, you can't direct it anywhere else. It would have been easy to ascend from brutish to cute, but Palminteri makes things harder for himself, and more rewarding, by never dropping his guard, never relinquishing the swarthy and sinister side of Cheech's nature; he is as frightening in his defense of artistic autonomy as he was in the footsteps of his boss.

Allen respects that point of view, I think, more than he would admit. "Bullets Over Broadway" openly recommends love, of course, and its hero—deliberately or otherwise—grows into an alarming Allen clone, right down to the muted tweeds and the gulping patterns of speech, but you can't miss a sneaking admiration for the single-minded Cheech. Carlo Di Palma shoots the movie with his usual vigor, in saturated tones of taxicab yellow and fall gold, yet the scene that stays in your head is a peaceful one of Cheech and David perched at a bar, sipping beer and mulling over the play, with David inquiring gently into the perils of life beyond the stage: it feels like Allen having a conversation with himself. The last few years saw Woody dragged through perils of his own—the press ambush, the bullring of the courts—with such force that you expected him to disappear forever, to grub a hole in the sand and stay there. And if he did come back, people asked, what kind of pictures would he make? Ibsen on the Hudson? A new Oresteia, only less funny? But, no, we get "Manhattan Murder Mystery" and "Bullets Over Broadway": airy, unimportant, very slightly mad movies, neither bulging with gags nor straining on tiptoe to grab moral philosophy off the top shelf. They are the best—in retrospect, the only—reply he could have made. We thought Woody Allen had lost touch with the entire world, not to mention his audience; instead, he seems to be levelling with us, to be contenting himself with our pleasure, more keenly than ever before. Make 'em laugh. ♦

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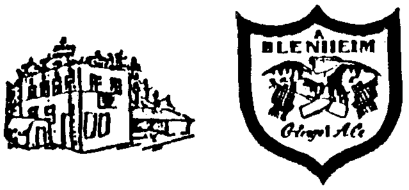

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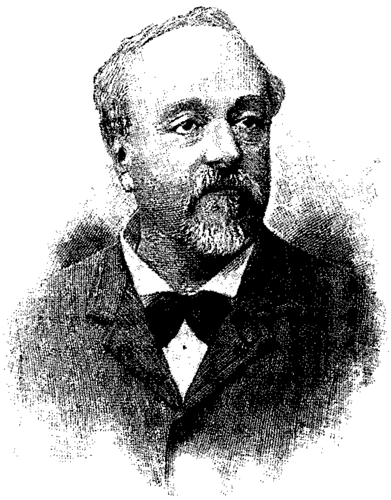
MUSICAL EVENTS

CHABRIER'S LAUGHTER

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

ALMOST everyone loved Chabrier. For César Franck, his piano pieces were a link across a century and a half to the clavecinists. Debussy, so we're told, would cheerfully play through the whole of his comic opera "L'Étoile," singing all the parts. And the first performance of his larger comedy, "Le Roi Malgré Lui," according to Ravel, "changed the face of French harmony for ever."



Emmanuel Chabrier is rediscovered again, for the celebration of his centenary.

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That's not too bold a claim. The brassy start to the overture of "Le Roi," proudly landing on enriched chords (B major with added seventh and ninth, E major with added sixth), gives to dissonances the glow and rest of consonances, and opens the door not only for this opera but for much of Satie, a little of Debussy, and some of Messiaen. Chabrier, like most musicians of his generation (he was born in 1841), had to make some accommodation to Wagner, and he did so by adopting a sidewise tactic. Expanded harmony, instead of leading to length and depth, made possible a new lightness of equipoised contradictions. Where in "Tristan und Isolde" a dissonance had taken four hours to find its resolution, with "Le Roi Malgré Lui" we have sprung into the air, and entered, or begun to enter, a world in which chords will never have such long-term consequences. The effect could be frivolous. It often is wonderfully frivolous. But in Chabrier frivolity is a serious response to the musical situation, and the seriousness compels a perfectionism with few parallels in music.

The best Chabrier anecdote is relevant here. In 1880, the composer went with other French musicians to attend a production of "Tristan" in Munich. As the prelude was about to begin, one of Chabrier's companions noticed that he was in tears. Why? Because he'd "waited ten years to hear that A on the cellos." Back home in Paris, he dashed off a piano duet, "Souvenirs de Munich," in which themes from the opera are smartly refashioned to make their entries in a quadrille. The piece is, of course, funny, but the parody isn't anxious or spiteful. Chabrier's laughter makes a good noise: it's a wholehearted laughter. What is deeply loved can be deeply mocked.

A fair bit of Chabrier is mockery: Tristan and Isolde dancing a quadrille, or, in "L'Étoile," a drunk duet done in the style of Donizetti. But the mockery is part of a larger sense of what music is, which may explain why it's a generous mockery. Just as he was happy not to resolve his discords, so he was happy not to resolve his incongruities of style. Everything was done in the spirit of joyous syncopation: of displacement, of patterns interfering with one another. Perhaps this came out of his early training with Spanish piano teachers, for, lurking in the corners of his pieces—even when they're in waltz time, as so often they are—there will frequently be the thrum of a habanera, or some other Hispanic rhythm. And this renewal of his art from Spanish sources may explain in part the affinity he had with Manet.

But, while nobody would think of Manet as only a signpost to the next generation, the honoring of Chabrier is flavored with neglect. He has, as Roland-Manuel put it in 1965, "the painful but delicate privilege of seeing himself rediscovered every twenty years." And here we are, duly rediscovering him again now—a little late, but in time for the centenary, last month, of his death. Some recordings

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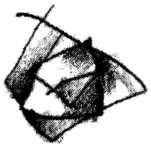
have appeared, or reappeared: the brilliant account of "L'Étoile" that came out of the Lyons production conducted by John Eliot Gardiner a decade ago (French EMI 7478898); the French Radio version of "Le Roi Malgré Lui," from the same period, under Charles Dutoit (Erato 2292-45792-2); and a selection of the finest piano pieces beautifully presented by Alain Planès (Harmonia Mundi HMC 901465). Start with "L'Étoile" and you won't be able to stop.

The Edinburgh Festival this year celebrated Chabrier with a variety of concerts and with stage productions—by Opera North, still the liveliest British opera company outside Glyndebourne—of both "L'Étoile" and "Le Roi Malgré Lui." Like any joke, "L'Étoile" depends on language, and a performance in English is bound to miss something. French sensuousness has a vocabulary all its own—in terms of sound, there's no substitute for a word like "amoureux"—and the flow of lightly accented and conjoined French syllables is hard to reproduce in English, especially with the unavoidable requirement to bang in a regular full rhyme. What's cajoling and sophisticated in French is likely to become merely dittyish. Also, one has to forgo Chabrier's exuberant play with stress, which is another reflection of his syncopated spirit. When the hero of "L'Étoile" comes on, as a mezzo in drag, he repeatedly throws his name against the musical metre, so that the accent bounces from syllable to syllable: "Lazúli, Lázulí, Lazúli, Lázulí." No need to change that, of course. (Yet the Opera North version, by Jeremy Sams, did.) Later, however, deliberately dislodged emphases of this kind are tied into the French. Lazuli, in his song about the lowly place of husbands, shows his disdain in singing "Un mari" so that the noun is only a quick repeated-note ricochet off the stressed article. If one were to find an equivalent in English, the effect would be simply that of a poor translation; Mr. Sams has "Carry on," which makes the rhythm natural, and so loses the point.



But Mr. Sams is surely aware of his losses, and is determined to provide compensation for them elsewhere and in other ways, which he does, brilliantly. In places where Chabrier brings back the same words, Mr. Sams will give him couplets, and so compound the ridiculousness of rhyme. When the composer is, at the same time, working with precise rhythmic patterns, in a way that makes him the unofficial bridge between Offenbach and Stravinsky, the result can be neat. The start of the finale to the second act, for instance, is given a lift by the doubling, and even tripling, of rhymes: "Like it or not, there was a shot! Without a doubt, a shot rang out!" Mr. Sams's wit is unashamedly Gilbertian, but Chabrier's music is related to Sullivan's as champagne is to lukewarm tea, and so any potential coziness is scotched by the polish and thrill of the score. This recension of "L'Étoile" should give Chabrier a boost throughout the English-speaking world.

The Opera North staging, directed by Phyllida Lloyd and designed by Anthony Ward, took up the revised libretto's invitation into a children's picture-book world of simple shapes and blazing colors. The production was a delight when it was new three years ago, and it was a delight again in Edinburgh, with much the same cast. (Another interpretation, though, might explore aspects of the piece that go beyond family entertainment. One could, for instance, restore the original words, by Chabrier's friend Verlaine, for the song in which the king demonstrates his torture chair—a chair through the seat of which a "great enormous spike" can be raised, to make this the punishment "richest in pleasures.") Mary Hegarty, as Laoula, conveyed princessly pertness in alternation with loveliness, always with the natural virtuosity that Chabrier—a natural virtuoso himself as a pianist, by all accounts—made a condition. Paul Nilon was appealing as the absurd monarch, and the score was luminously and warmly played under Valentin Reymond.

It's easy to understand why, after such a triumph, Opera North should have asked Mr. Sams and a collaborator, Michael Wilcox, to have a go at "Le Roi Malgré Lui." In this case, though, the problems of adaptation are graver. "L'Étoile" works superbly in the form in which Chabrier left it; "Le Roi Malgré Lui" doesn't. The composer seems to have recognized this, since he wrote on his copy of the libretto that it was "a bit of everything: a bouillabaisse by Najac and Burani, cooked by Richepin, into which I threw some spices." (Emile de Najac and Paul Burani wrote the libretto with which he began; Jean Richepin had a hand in the piece subsequently, before giving up in despair.) Also, there's an undertone of worry, defensiveness, and dissatisfaction

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in the letters he wrote while composing the piece: the opera would not be performed, he declared, until he was satisfied with it, and on another occasion he insisted that it had to be "very gay and slick, and get a lot of laughs."

Laughs? Smiles, perhaps. "Le Roi" isn't an opéra bouffe, like "L'Étoile." It isn't so much outrageous as exquisitely odd. The story, from which this quality descends, concerns a historical incident—or, rather, a historical lack of incident. The year is 1574. Henri de Valois, younger brother of Charles IX of France, has been elected King of Poland, which he doen't want to be, and the action presents various political and amorous intrigues involving him and his courtiers in Kraków, where they don't want to be. As the piece opens, the French lords are playing cards, and the sense of exile and inactivity—of the pleasure but also the wearisomeness of a useless occupation—is vital. Chabrier is perhaps dramatizing his own self-doubts, his own feeling that what he is about in this work is a game in never-never land.

Also vital is the fact that this never-never land is Polish. Many of the opera's numbers echo Chopinesque forms—waltz, polonaise, mazurka, nocturne—which may have something to do with the fact that, after the Spaniards, Chabrier as a boy had had a Polish music teacher. Cosima Wagner, not one who loved Chabrier or, in particular, this opera ("When we came out, the Countess Wolkenstein and I, we said that what would be really good would be never to hear a note of Chabrier ever again"), may nevertheless have responded to the Polish drift, since when she got home she had someone play Chopin to her in order to restore her faith in the small form.

Yet another essential reference in Chabrier's score is to the period of the action—not least in the music of Henri's big solo song, where he's accompanied by a low-pitched string group suggesting a consort of viols, in closeted polyphony. Besides changing the face of French harmony, "Le Roi Malgré Lui" had quite an effect on French style, in proposing a neoclassicism that was willfully anachronistic. And that was yet another aspect of Chabrier's syncopation: offered a choice—between alternative styles, chords, rhythms, attitudes—he always picked both, and made them work together.

Out of the discrepancy in this opera

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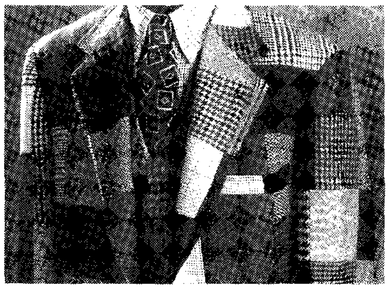

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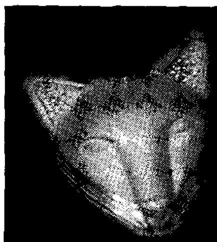

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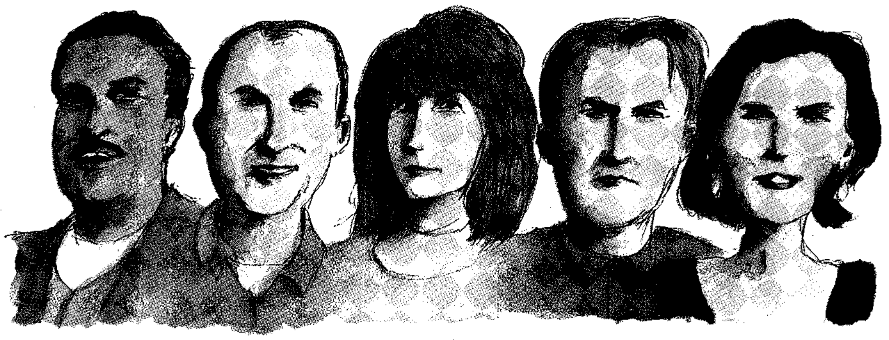
between the nineteenth century (from Chopin to Chabrier, by way of a bevy of temptresses echoing Wagner's Flower Maidens or Venusbergers) and the sixteenth comes the uncertainty that the people onstage feel: they have good reason not to be sure where they are—or, rather, when they are. Lose that, and you've lost the basic reason for the opera to be as it is. Mr. Sams and Mr. Wilcox lost it. They substituted for the original gauzy location a firm, gray setting in revolutionary politics in "Moldavia," and made the piece into a grim little spy story. Their narrative was certainly a lot more straightforward than the "bouillabaisse." (One relishes Vincent d'Indy's remark, in a letter to the composer written the day before the show opened, "It's going to annoy you, but here goes . . . I don't understand the plot!") However, straightforwardness is not what this opera's about.

Three numbers worked. One was the "Fête Polonaise," exhilaratingly played and sung under the baton of Paul Daniel. The two others were Fritelli's songs, which Geoffrey Dolton sang with vividness and gusto. But that success, which must have been apparent in rehearsal, should have been a warning. Fritelli is just what this opera in the main is not: he's a vigorous buffo interloper in a piece that's altogether more imprecise. Also, while turning him gay brought some crude humor into the third act (and by that point one was grateful for anything), the corollary was that his duet of Venetian reminiscences with his wife had to go, which meant not only that the idea of Venice then had to be speedily planted in time for the barcarolle but also that a useful comic number was dropped. Even more serious was the omission of the finale. A version of the opera that can't bring it to its proper conclusion, where themes from several earlier numbers quickly glide by, can't be said to have fulfilled the task. ♦

ON TELEVISION

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD FOR REAL

BY JAMES WOLCOTT



Gang of Five: Mitchell, Low, Leary, McDonell, and Ellicott on "Last Call."

WHEN Tom Snyder finally docks in the CBS slot following the David Letterman show this winter, his ashen hair will be the first sign of age in the late hour since Johnny Carson retired. Until Snyder's début, late-night television remains the province of youth. Letterman and Jay Leno may be in their forties, but they act like adolescents whose kernels are still popping. If anything, they may be too hyper for some young dozers in the viewing audience, whose befogged heads still hang heavy over Kurt Cobain's suicide. To relate to the Prozac Nation on its own immobilized, barely articulate level, producers have created chat shows aimed at college-age cocooners. These new programs seem to be beamed not only to dormitories but *from* dormitories.

Jon Stewart, a former MTV personality whose show competes locally against Conan O'Brien's, greets his guests as if he were hosting a campus mixer. "The Jon Stewart Show" is an understatedly hip place for guys to hang out—a *Details* of the airwaves, without the homoerotic pouting. Stewart doesn't do a bad job

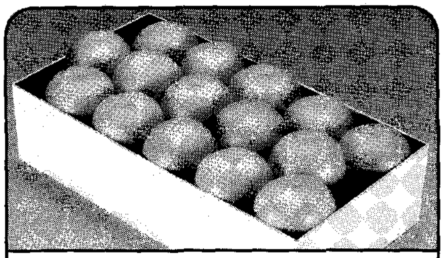
He's funny and self-deprecating, and his interviews have an easy, back-and-forth-lob quality (whereas Conan still strains as if he were juggling medicine balls). But Stewart's comedic stance is so noncommittal and the production values of his show are so nondescript that the modest space he has created for himself seems like limbo. He's making clown faces from inside a vacuum jar.

"Last Call," a weeknight show that's taped in Manhattan and syndicated nationally by M.C.A., strikes its sparks by emulating the dorm-room bull session. Created by Brandon Tartikoff, the former programming chief of NBC and the current chairman of New World Entertainment, "Last Call" is packaged as a pop-culture round table. Like "The McLaughlin Group," the show consists of a self-proclaimed Gang of Five—in this case, one inflated adult and four irreverent cutups. The adult is Terry McDonell, the former editor of *Esquire*, and a man who has stared out of high windows and seen much. (McDonell rid *Esquire* of its sissy sensitivity, publishing such samurai as Tom McGuane, Jim Harrison, and Hunter S. Thompson.) Although he is not the official host of the show, McDonell sits with the most authority—one foot propped on the table, the better to show off his silky socks. Absent by his very presence, he enters a Zen mode, cultivating the aura of mentor while the other regulars do their best to escape his magnetic pull. These are Tad Low, a merry mischief-maker whose Yale degree calls our entire educational system into question; Elvis Mitchell, who reviews movies for National Public Radio and TV for *Spin;* Brianne Leary, an actress-slash-whatever who appeared on the cop show "CHiPs"; and Sue Ellicott, a correspondent for the London *Sunday Times*, who drives men mad with her dewy cheekbones, dewy English accent, and—what can I say, the woman's a lush meadow. Every night, the "Last Call" participants rehash the day's news, thrash their pet peeves, and treat the set—complete with pool table and beverage area—as their playpen. They all think they're cute. What's interesting is how much ill will even cuteness contains these days.

Part of the hostility on "Last Call" is personal. The five don't hide the fact that they can barely stand one another. The first shows crackled with competitive friction as Tad Low, dubbed the biggest idiot on TV by *Entertainment Weekly*, acted like an unhousebroken puppy in his grabs for attention, pulling such stunts as trying to crash the MTV Video Music Awards. Yet Tad doesn't emerge as the show's most unpopular cast member. That tag belongs to Brianne, whose parroty voice and actressy manner are obvious irritants to the others. Greeting her one evening, Tad said, "I think you're ovulating. . . . It's been hell behind scenes." When she flew to Los Angeles to file some jocular filler on the O. J. Simpson media circus ("You ran her out of here on a rail," Elvis joked during the opening segment), it was clear that the others wished her stay there would be a long one. When she returned to the set, they could barely check their lack of enthusiasm. In a voice deadpan with irony, Elvis said, "We missed you so much, Bree. We thought you'd *never* come back." The night after this hazing, Brianne was missing from the panel, and no mention was made of her absence. (She has since been reassigned as the show's "road correspondent.")

The overriding form of hostility is the show's media hipness. Media hipness may appear loose, its name-dropping as casual as small change being jangled in the pocket, but it mostly represents hardened attitudes toward age, appearance, and success. To be media hip is to be not only plugged in but offhand, superior—pissy. It's to reduce everything to a personal putdown. Hence Terry thinks nothing of sneering at President Clinton as a junk-food-eating philanderer; and Elvis comments, after showing a news clip of Senator Ted Kennedy campaigning at a Head Start center, "He looked like a child molester there." A lot of the show's pop-culture coverage takes its tack from the journalism of Joe Queenan—resentful of success and mocking of failure, stringing one-liners like barbed wire. Reviewing the Sylvester Stallone–Sharon Stone movie "The Specialist," Elvis quipped, as James Woods, Rod Steiger, and Eric Roberts floated across the screen, "It's like a lizard convention. The last time I saw this much bad skin, it was in an Oxy-5 commercial."

Of course, in a celebrity culture as oversold as ours a corrosive dose of cynicism is a necessary antidote. Entertainment has plastered its glossy face on so many other fields (politics, sports, publishing) that it's only natural to want to draw a few mustaches and black eyes. But sometimes it isn't only images that are



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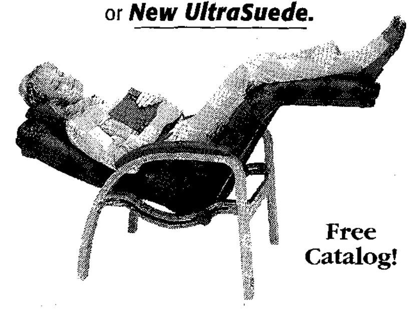

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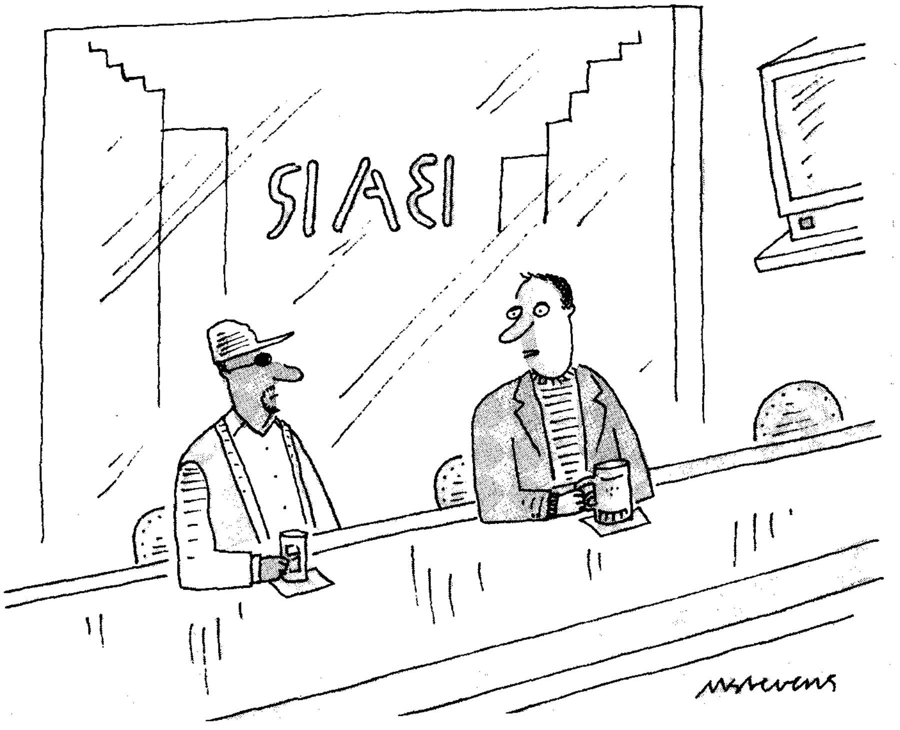
being defamed. After the tennis star Vitas Gerulaitis was found dead, Tad did a riff about how he had probably O.D.'d: "I have a theory. He was out in the back yard playing tennis, and he basically snorted the baseline. And that stuff is like lawn fertilizer—that'll kill you." True, Gerulaitis had a history of drug use, but since it was quickly revealed that he had died of carbon-monoxide poisoning, an apology seemed in order. None came. It didn't even seem to dawn on Tad that the death of someone so young might be a thing to mourn—or at least not a thing to turn into a joke so soon after the event. "Last Call" is further evidence that everything is material now, and everyone is fair game. Sometimes the nastiness is directed not at single celebrities but at entire cross-sections of society. In a discussion of Haiti, Elvis—who is a friend of mine and who (I *hope*) knows better—described our soldiers thus: "These are the guys . . . who couldn't get jobs at McDonald's when they got out of high school, so they joined the Marines."

Late-night TV needn't be this sour and exclusionary. A few years ago, Comedy Central had a series called "Night After Night," hosted by the standup comic Allan Havey, which was clever and easygoing. Wanting to compare notes with Havey about late-night TV, I caught up with him recently backstage at Caroline's, where he was headlining. He knows at first hand how paralyzing the hip cult of youth has become. At forty, he worries about his potential obsolescence. On his own show, he found there was resistance to booking John Frankenheimer, the director of "The Manchurian Candidate," because he was deemed too old. "Which was weird to me," Havey said, "because when I first began watching talk shows as a kid—my father used to wake me up for Johnny Carson—it never occurred to me that I should only be interested in watching people my own age. It was grownups who were cool. They smoked and drank—had actually done stuff. We all wanted to be Dean Martin."

The resistance to age may be crumbling. The reborn popularity of Tony Bennett and Johnny Cash suggests that, contrary to what programmers think, young audiences don't mind a little mileage. They appreciate some brassy measure of clout. "I thought it was a bad move at first, but I now think Tom Snyder might really work after Letterman," Havey told me. "He has the right heft. I'm looking forward to him." God help me, I find myself looking forward to him, too. Tom Snyder is all there, which is more than you can say for the cast of "Last Call," who put more thought into their wardrobe selections than into their snooty attitudes. ♦



"I'm not much of a baseball-strike fan. I'm more of a hockey-strike fan."

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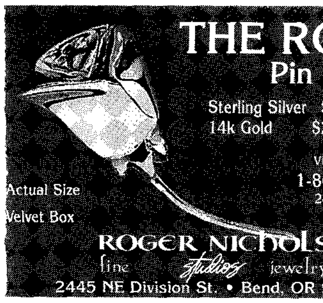

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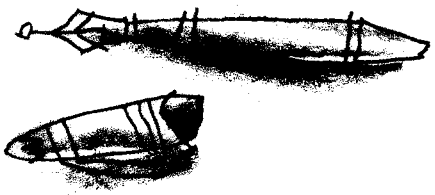


BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

SIXTIES REDUX

In the Lake of the Woods

by Tim O'Brien
(Houghton Mifflin; $21.95)

O'BRIEN'S latest novel spreads the persistent theme of his work—the lingering memory of Vietnam—across an uneasy domestic landscape shaped by a foundering marriage and American politics. Aptly, it's about a run for the Canadian border. In 1986, John Wade, Vietnam vet and golden-boy senatorial candidate, suffers a landslide defeat. He and his wife, Kathy, try to put the pieces back together by taking a cottage in Minnesota's Lake of the Woods—a postage stamp jutting into Canada where water and forest seem indistinguishable. In this hinterland, they run straight into everything they're running from. There are secrets to be explained, and others to be divulged, but instead they churn away inside both John and Kathy, propelling the book, like an old Evinrude motor, into murkier and murkier waters. John's biggest secret, however, is no secret: campaign mudslinging revealed that he was present at the 1968 My Lai massacre. This remarkable book is about the slipperiness of truth, the weight of forgetting, and the way two people disappear into themselves and, ultimately, into the Lake of the Woods. In a footnote O'Brien confesses that John's ordeal "seems far more authentic than my own faraway experience" of Vietnam, and that the vanishing acts set down here were written "to give me back my vanished life."

A Marriage Made at Woodstock

by Cathie Pelletier
(Crown; $22)

FREDERICK STONE and Chandra Kimball-Stone (née Lorraine) did indeed meet at Woodstock. In the twenty-one years of their marriage, Frederick has mutated from a poetic hippie into an accountant who applies his expertise to every aspect of life, from the amortization of his razor to the hour at which he rises. He does, however, seem to regard his wife as a pearl beyond price, despite the contempt with which she treats him as she flounces off to animal-rights demonstrations, or to the loony New Age seminars she offers the psychologically needy. But, for all his measuring, Frederick has an appreciation of language, a scholarly curiosity, and a wide grasp of not entirely useless knowledge. After Chandra (inevitably) leaves him, he is full of winning thoughts—wondering, for instance, if the hyphen that has linked Chandra's name to his will "eventually end up in the word *ex-husband*."

Shelter

by Jayne Anne Phillips
(Houghton Mifflin; $21.95)

LITTLE happens in Phillips' atmospheric second novel, but its dark, visionary ending is well worth the wait. In the summer of 1963, Alma and Lenny Swenson and their two best friends, Delia and Cap, are at Camp Shelter for Girl Guides in West Virginia, singing songs and giving anti-Communist speeches at dinnertime and washing their dishes in the stream. Lenny and Cap, at fifteen, are half in love with each other, and eleven-year-old Alma sneaks into Delia's cot at night in a vain attempt to protect her from her dreams. All four are wordlessly grateful to have escaped the strange sexual undercurrents of their lives at home. There are no boys here, aside from little Buddy Carmody, the son of the camp cook, and Frank, the bugler. Buddy spends his days tearing through the woods, or tagging along after Lenny and Cap, or getting underfoot in the huge kitchen managed by his vast and patient mother. He is safer at Camp Shelter than in their shack down the road, where his father, a murderer newly released from prison, lies in wait for him, masturbating and scheming and getting drunk. The narrative jumps from character to character, and initially the going is rough: you must pick and push your way through a dense tangle of words and images and smells and associations. But then suddenly you've broken through and you're on the inside, with the children, looking out—and trying to prepare for what's coming down the road. ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS

ANOTHER ROYAL SCANDAL

BY CHARLES McGRATH

As James listened, every pulse in his body straining to give her the attention she so clearly needed, Diana started to let go. She could feel his warmth towards her, like the first blast of humidity that hits you when you arrive in a hot destination.
—*"Princess in Love," by Anna Pasternak*

I am compelled to reprobate the loose manner in which Englishmen think of and speak about women. They have a bad habit of telling gross stories over their wine, and often sully a reputation by an innuendo.
—*Tinsley's Magazine, October, 1868, referring to rumors that Queen Victoria had entered into a secret marriage with John Brown, her gillie.*

WE were mad for each other. Our hands first touched one afternoon at Balmoral in 1865, as I was helping her into the pony trap, and the next instant she was clasping me to her bosom. "Hoot, wumman, what ere ye doin'?" I said, but it was too late. Rapid vibrations coursed through my blood, and I knew that there was no going back. A night of passion appeared to be our destiny. Her lovely form, plump as a haggis. Her sweet little chins. The fetching way her eyes turned down at the corners. . . . I felt the salmon that lives under my kilt begin to stir, dreaming of the sunlight.

"My self-esteem has been destroyed by negativity and doubt," she whispered to me. "Albert was such a prude—always worrying about his bloody rents. My delicate sense of optimism has been ripped cruelly from its stem. I need a man blessed with potent physical candor, a belief in his own body—a man who can stride naked across a room, secure in the knowledge that all is as it should be."

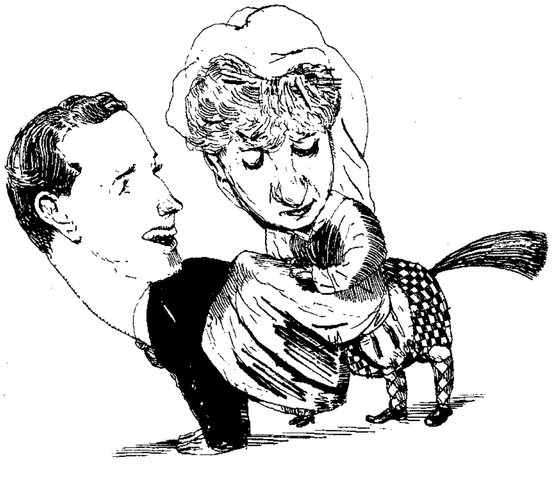
I stroked her hair—with wisps as gray as the morning mist on a Highland loch—where it peered out from that silly white headdress that she always wore. "Auch, dinna tak nach mair," I murmured. There were no questions, no doubts. My antennae were on full alert, and I longed to infuse her body with an elixir of love and strength.

I dined a week later in her private sitting room at Windsor—her Closet, she called it. Through an open door I could not help but notice her opulent dressing room, all green and gold and smelling of expensive soap, and, beyond—seemingly unattainable, but perhaps not—her scarlet and gilt bedchamber, with the canopy bed itself, the altar of my longing, draped in white chintz. The portrait of the late Prince Albert, I was startled to see—the one that had hung over her head these last four years—was missing, leaving a gray blankness upon the wall: an emptiness that needed to be filled.

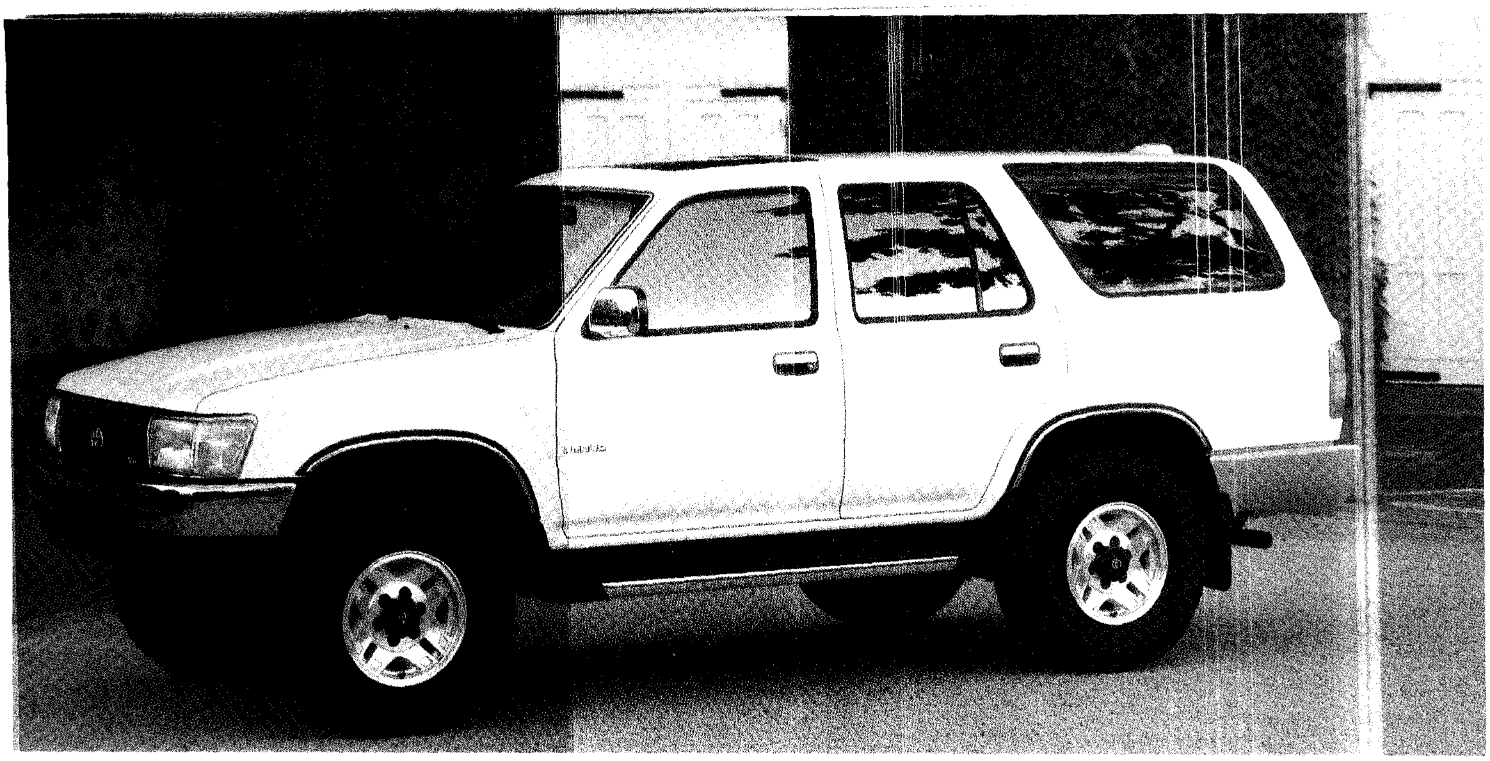
We drank whiskey, neat, and again I felt the vibrations coursing through my veins. I was too inflamed to eat, and so she finished my plate for me. "I am a woman of enormous, insatiable appetites," she said, wiping her lips. "I need passion, I need to be made to feel proud of my sexuality. I need to make up for the desperate days when my self-loathing reached a hideous crescendo." With the ease of the horsewoman she would like to have been, she stood up, crossed the room, and slid into my lap. I was raging with lust, and yet not so selfish or unmanly as to be unaware of her own tender yearning. I was not unaware, either, that the salmon was now thrashing mightily, caught on a hook of desire. Without saying a word, she stretched out her hand and slowly led me to the bedchamber.

Of what happened next I will not say much. I am too much a gentleman—or, rather, not a gentleman, exactly, but an honest Highland crofter who knows how to behave. At last when our passion was spent, and she lay diaphanous upon the sheets, puffy, like a clootie dumpling fresh from the fire, I drew my tartan over her, saying, "Ye'd best cover up. I'll nae have ye comin doon wi' a cauld." She smiled and said "Your quiet, calm, undemanding support has enwrapped me like a warm coat in winter. I marvel at your uncomplicated masculinity."

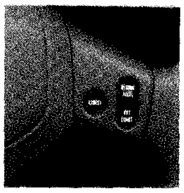
As she slept, I tiptoed to the bath Her thousands of toilet articles were there—all of British manufacture, I was happy to note—and hanging on a hook were her dear little mobcap and her widow's weeds, so well-worn that they were almost green with age Overcome with happiness, I plunged my face into the mobcap, hungrily drinking in her rich, peaty scent



We had many romps after that—at least five or six, most of them a Balmoral, but one at my mother' cottage while she dozed in a chair—but that first time is the one I remember best. To this day, her humidity stays close to me—a littl rain cloud hugging the loch.

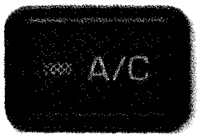


Rugged ADVENTURE,
civilized savings.



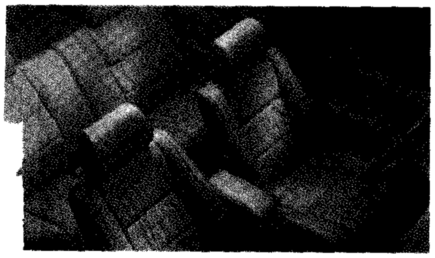
Cruise control and intermittent wipers.

Everyone knows 4Runner means ADVENTURE. But that doesn't mean you have to rough it. Because the new 4Runner 4WD SR5 V6 Limited offers you the creature COMFORTS you crave, at a very comfortable SAVINGS.



Air conditioning.

The 4Runner Limited delivers a full range of AMENITIES, including all the features shown plus front and rear chrome bumpers, aluminum wheels AND MORE, to make your journey smooth and pleasurable. All this, at a SAVINGS of up to $1,000.*



Leather-trimmed seats.

And when you consider 4Runner SR5 V6's standard features, like rear Anti-lock Brakes,** AM/FM stereo and tinted glass, plus its REPUTATION for QUALITY and dependability, it all ADDS up to extra VALUE.

The Toyota 4Runner LIMITED. What could be MORE CIVILIZED?

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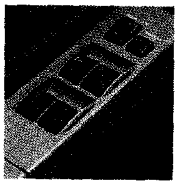
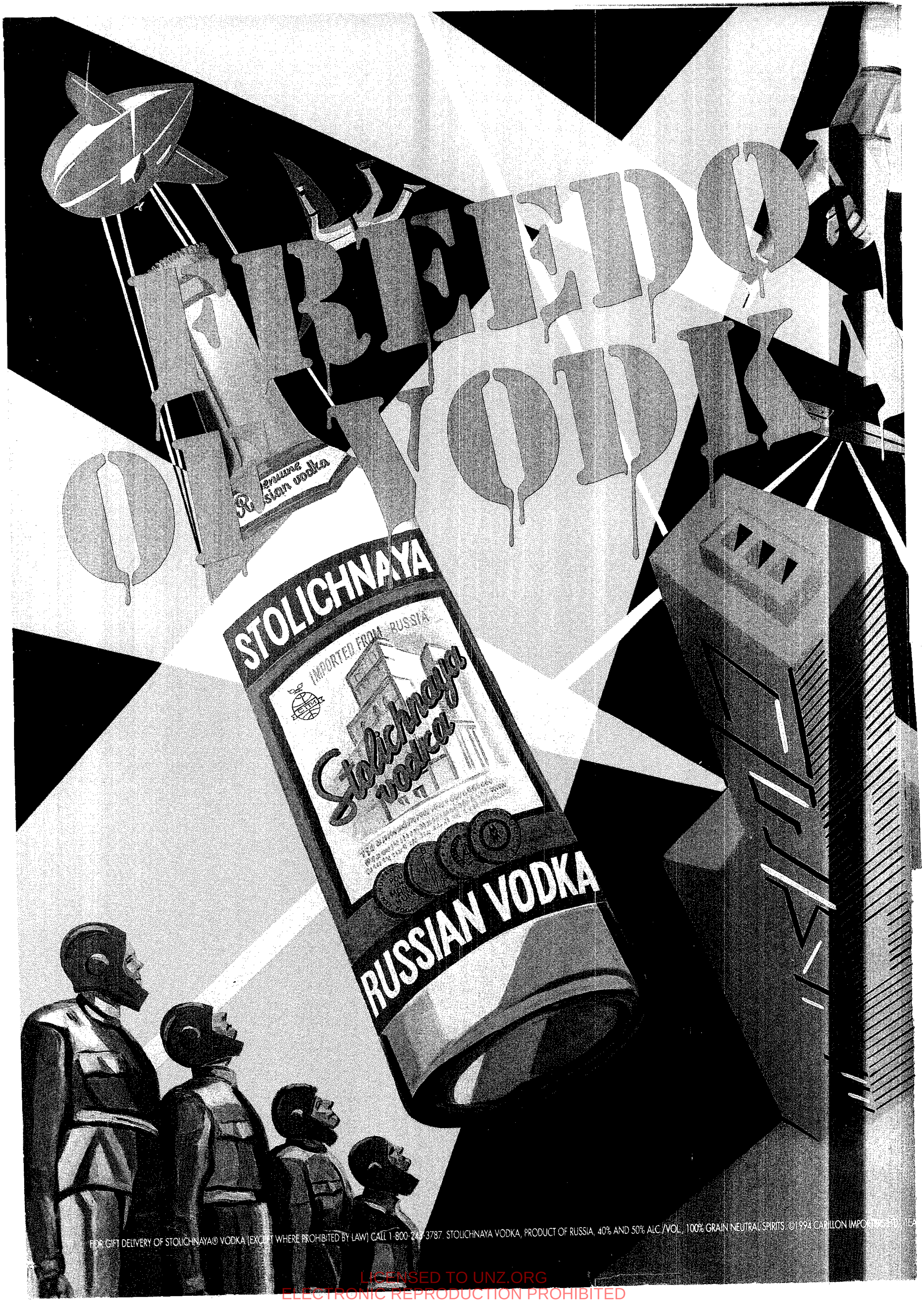


Power windows, mirrors and locks.

TOYOTA 4RUNNER
I Love What You Do For Me

Toyota reminds you to *Tread Lightly!*™ on public and private land. *Savings based on MSRP of individual options. Actual dealer price and customer savings may vary. **Optional 4-wheel Anti-lock Brakes available. ©1994 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. Buckle Up! Do it for those who love you.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